



**A GRINGO IN
MAÑANA-LAND**

HARRY L. FOSTER

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A GRINGO IN MAÑANA-LAND



A CHIEFTAIN DRESSED FOR THE EASTER CEREMONY OF THE
YAQUI INDIANS

A GRINGO IN MAÑANA-LAND

BY

HARRY L. FOSTER

Author of

"The Adventures of a Tropical Tramp,"

"A Beachcomber in the Orient," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR



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FOREWORD

THE term "*gringo*"—a word of vague origin, once applied with contempt to the American in Mexico—is now used throughout Latin America, without its former opprobrium, to describe any foreigner.

The Spanish "*mañana*"—literally "to-morrow"—is extremely popular south of the Rio Grande, where, in phrases suggesting postponement, it enables the inhabitant to solve many of life's most perplexing problems.

This book covers various random wanderings in Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. It deals with a romance or two, a revolution or so, and a hodge-podge of personal experience. The incidents of the earlier chapters precede, while those of the later ones follow, the author's vagabond journeys recorded in "The Adventures of a Tropical Tramp," and "A Beachcomber in the Orient."

The chapter on the Yaqui Indians is published with the permission of the editor of "The Open Road." The photographs of the Guatemalan revolution were taken by Roy Neil Bunstine, of Guatemala City.

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CHAPTER I

ON THE BORDER

I

IT was my original plan to ride from Arizona to Panama by automobile.

In fact, I even went so far as to purchase the automobile. It had been newly painted, and the second-hand dealer assured me that no car in all the border country had a greater reputation.

This proved to be the truth. The first stranger I met grinned at my new prize with an air of pleased recognition.

“Well! Well!” he exclaimed. “Do *you* own it now?”

So did the second stranger, and the third. I had acquired not only an automobile, but a definite standing in the community. People who had hitherto passed me without a glance now smiled at me. There was even some discussion of organizing a

club, of which I was to be the president, my term of office to continue until I could sell the car to some one else.

When I announced that I meant to drive to Panama—down through Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and any other republics which I might discover along the way—every one who heard of the idea offered encouragement:

“You’ve got the right car for *that* trip, my boy. Since you’ll find no roads down there, you’ll need a companion to walk ahead and chop down the cactus or level off the mountains, and if you step hard on the gas, you’ll just about be able to keep up with him.”

II

I suspected that there was an element of insincerity in this encouragement.

I was rather young, however, at the time of that first venture at foreign travel. It was only a few months after the Armistice, and I felt disinclined to return to cub-reporting on a daily newspaper. I elected myself to the loftier-sounding profession of Free-Lance Newspaper Correspondent. I purchased a palm-beach suit and an automatic pistol. I was going south into the land of romance—of tropical moons glimpsed through whispering palm-

trees—of tinkling guitars echoing through Moorish *patios*—of black-eyed *señoritas* and red-nosed soldiers of fortune—of all the many things beyond the ken of mere cub-reporters.

Despite the encouragement, I tacked my banner to the back of my car, and set out upon a round of farewells.

III

My departure was very dramatic.

Men shook hands with an air of finality. Two or three girls kissed me good-by with conventional little pecks that seemed to say, "I'll never see the poor devil again, so I may as well waste some osculation on him."

I had made the entire circuit, until there remained only a couple of village school-marms, who happened—most unfortunately—to live on top of the highest hill in town. Half-way to the summit, I perceived that my car was never destined to climb that hill. It slackened speed. It stopped. It commenced to roll backward. I was forced to throw it into reverse, just as the school-marms appeared in their doorway. The situation was humiliating. I became slightly flustered. I meant to step on the brake, but I stepped on the gas.

Wherefore, after some one had picked me out of the *débris*, I started southward by train.

CHAPTER II

BANDITS!

I

I **CROSSED** the border at daybreak.

In the manner of a Gringo who first passes the Mexican frontier, I walked cautiously, glancing behind me from time to time, anticipating hostility, if not actual violence.

In the dusk of early morning the low, flat-roofed adobe city of Nogales assumed all the forbidding qualities of the fictional Mexico. But the leisurely immigration official was polite. The customs' inspector waved me through all formalities with one graceful gesture. No one knifed me in the back. And somewhere ahead, beyond the dim line of railway coaches, an engineer tolled his bell. The train, as though to shatter all foreign misconceptions of the country, was about to depart on scheduled time!

II

Somewhat surprised, I made a rush for the ticket window.

A native gentleman was there before me. He also was buying passage, but since he was personally

acquainted with the agent, it behooved him—according to the dictates of Spanish etiquette—to converse pleasantly for the next half-hour.

“And your *señora*?”

“*Gracias! Gracias!* She enjoys the perfect health! And your own most estimable *señora*?”

“Also salubrious, thanks to God!”

“I am gratified! Profoundly gratified! And the little ones? When last I had the pleasure to see you, the *chiquitita* was suffering from—”

The engineer blew his whistle. A conductor called, “*Vamonos!*” I jumped up and down with Gringo impatience. The Mexican gentleman gave no indication of haste. The engineer might be so rude as to depart without him, but *he* would not be hurried into any omission of the proper courtesies. His dialogue was closing, it is true, but closing elaborately, still according to the dictates of Spanish etiquette, in a handshake through the ticket window, in an expression of mutual esteem and admiration, in eloquent wishes to be remembered to everybody in Hermosillo—enumerated by name until it sounded like a census—in another handshake, and finally in a long-repeated series of “*Adios!*” and “*Que le vaya bien!*”

What mattered it if all the passengers missed the train? Would there not be another one to-morrow? This, despite the railway schedule, was the land of “*Mañana.*”

III

On his first day in Mexico, the American froths over each delay. In time he learns to accept it with fatalistic calm.

As it happened, the dialogue ceased at the right moment. Every one caught the train. Another polite Mexican gentleman cleared a seat for me, and I settled myself just as Nogales disappeared in a cloud of dust, wondering why any train should start at such an unearthly hour of the morning.

The reason soon became obvious. The time-table had been so arranged in order that the engineer could maintain a comfortable speed of six miles an hour, stop with characteristic Mexican sociability at each group of mud huts along the way, linger there indefinitely as though fearful of giving offense by too abrupt a departure, and still be able to reach his destination—about a hundred miles distant—before dark.

In those days—the last days of the Carranza régime—trains did not venture to run at night, and certainly not across the Yaqui desert. It was a forbidding country—an endless expanse of brownish sand relieved only by scraggly mesquite. Torrents from a long-past rainy season had seamed it with innumerable gullies, but a semi-tropic sun had left them dry and parched, and the gnarled greasewood upon their banks drooped brown and leafless. Even

the mountains along the horizon were gray and bleak and barren save for an occasional giant cactus that loomed in skeleton relief against a hot sky.

This was the State of Sonora, one of the richest in Mexico, but its wealth—like the wealth of all Mexico—was not apparent to the eye of the tourist. The villages at which we stopped were but groups of low adobe hovels. The dogs that slunk about each habitation, being of the Mexican hairless breed, were strangely in hārmōny with the desert itself. And the *peons*—dark-faced semi-Indians, mostly barefoot, and clad in tattered rags—seemed to have no occupation except that of frying a few beans and selling them to railway passengers.

At each infrequent station they were awaiting us. Aged beggars stumbled along the side of the coach, led by tiny children, to plead in whining voices for “*un centavito*”—“a little penny”—“for the love of God!” Women with bedraggled shawls over the head scurried from window to window, offering strange edibles for sale—baskets of cactus fruit resembling fresh figs—*frijoles* wrapped in pan-cake-like *tortillas* of corn-meal—legs of chicken floating in a yellow grease—while the passengers leaned from the car to bargain with them.

“What? Fifteen *centavos* for that stuff? *Car-ramba!*”

“Ten cents then?”

“No!”

“How much will you give?”

Both parties seemed to enjoy this play of wits, and when, with a Gringo's disinclination to haggle, I bought anything at the price first stated, the venders seemed a trifle disappointed. Everybody bought something at each stopping-place, and ate constantly between stations, as though eager to consume the purchases in time to repeat the bargaining at the next town. The journey became a picnic, and there was a child-like quality about the Mexicans that made it strangely resemble a Sunday-school outing at home.

Although an escort of *Carranzista* soldiers occupied a freight car ahead as a precaution against the bandits which infested Mexico in those days, the passengers appeared blandly unconcerned.

Each removed his coat, and lighted a cigarette. From the car wall a notice screamed the Spanish equivalent of “No Smoking,” but the conductor, stumbling into the coach over a family of *peons* who had crowded in from the second-class compartment, merely paused to glance at the smokers, and to borrow a light himself. Every one, with the friendliness for which the Latin-American is unsurpassed, engaged his neighbor in conversation. The portly gentleman who had cleared a seat for me inquired the object of my visit to Mexico, and listened politely while I slaughtered his language. The conductor bowed and thanked me for my ticket. When the



IN THOSE DAYS TRAINS DID NOT VENTURE TO RUN AT NIGHT ACROSS
THE SONORA DESERT



AN ESCORT OF SOLDIERS OCCUPIED A FREIGHT CAR AHEAD AS A
PRECAUTION AGAINST BANDITS

peon children in the aisle pointed at me and whispered, "*Gringo*," their mother ceased feeding a baby to "Shush!" them, their father kicked them surreptitiously with a loose-flapping sandal, and both parents smiled in response to my amused grin.

There was something pleasant and carefree about this Mexico that proved infectious. Atop the freight cars ahead, the escort of federal troops laid aside their Mausers, removed their criss-crossed cartridge-belts, and settled themselves for a *siesta*. As the desert sun rose higher, inducing a spirit of coma, the passengers also settled themselves for a nap. The babble of the morning gave place to silence—to silence broken only by the fretting cry of an infant and the steady click of the wheels as we crawled southward, hour after hour, through the empty wastes of mesquite.

And then, as always in Mexico, the unexpected happened.

The silence was punctured by the staccato roar of a machine gun!

IV

In an instant all was confusion.

Whether or not the shooting came from the Caranzista escort or from some gang of bandits hidden in the brush, no one waited to ascertain. Not a person screamed. Yet, as though trained by previous

experience, every one ducked beneath the level of the windows, the women sheltering their children, the men whipping out their long, pearl-handled revolvers. The only man who showed any sign of agitation was my portly friend. His immense purple sombrero had tumbled over the back-rest onto another seat, and he was frantic until he recovered it.

After the first roar of the machine-gun, all was quiet. The fatalistic calm of the Mexicans served only to heighten the suspense. The train had stopped. When, a few months earlier, Yaqui Indians had raided another express on this same line, the guard had cut loose with the engine, leaving the passengers to their Fate—a Fate somewhat gruesomely advertised by a few scraps of rotted clothing half-embedded in the desert sand. The thought that history had repeated itself was uppermost in my mind, and the *peon* on the floor beside me voiced it also, in a fatalistic muttering of:

“*Dios!* They have left us! We are so good as dead!”

We waited grimly—waited interminably. With a crash, the door opened. A dozen revolvers covered the man who entered. A dozen fingers tightened upon a trigger. But it was only the conductor.

“*No hay cuidado, señores,*” he said pleasantly. “The escort was shooting at a jack-rabbit.”

v

The passengers sat up again, laughing at one another, talking with excited gestures as they described their sensations, enjoying one another's chagrin, all of them as noisy and happy as children upon a picnic. They bought more *frijoles*, and the feast recommenced, lasting until mid-afternoon, when we pulled into Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora.

A swarm of porters rushed upon us, holding up tin license-tags as they screamed for our patronage. Hotel-runners leaped aboard the car and scrambled along the aisle, presenting us with cards and reciting rapidly the superior merits of their respective hostelries, meanwhile arguing with rival agents and assuring us that the other fellow's beds were alive with vermin, that the other fellow's food was rank poison, and that the other fellow's servants would at least rob us, if they did not commit actual homicide.

I fought my way through them to the platform, where another battle-scene was being enacted.

Mexican friends were meeting Mexican friends. To force a passage was a sheer impossibility. Two of them, recognizing each other, promptly went into a clinch, embracing one another, slapping one another upon the back, and venting their joy in loud

gurgles of ecstasy, meanwhile blocking up the entire platform.

Restraining *Gringo* impatience once more, I stood and laughed at them. In so many cases the extravagant greetings savored of insincerity. One noticed a flabbiness in the handclasps, a formality in the hugs, an affectation in the shouts of “*Ay!* My friend! How happy I am to see you!” Yet in many cases, the demonstrations were real—so real that they brought a peculiar little gulp into one’s throat, even while one laughed.

Be they sincere or insincere, I already liked these crazy Mexicans.

CHAPTER III

IN SLEEPY HERMOSILLO

I

A LITTLE brown *cochero* pounced upon me and took me aboard a dilapidated hack drawn by two mournful-looking quadrupeds.

“*Hotel Americano?*” he inquired.

“*No. Hotel distinctly Mejicano.*”

He whipped up his horses, and we jogged away through narrow streets lined with the massive, fortress-like walls of Moorish dwellings, past a tiny palm-grown *plaza* fronted by an old white cathedral, to stop finally before a one-story structure whose stucco was cracked and scarred, and dented with the bullet-holes of innumerable revolutions.

The proprietor himself, a dignified gentleman in black, advanced to meet me. Were there rooms? Why not, *señor?* Whereupon he seated himself before an immense ledger, to pore over it with knitted brows, stopping now and then to stare vacantly skyward in the manner of one who solves a puzzle or composes an epic poem.

“Number sixteen,” he finally announced.

“Occupied,” said a servant.

Another period of intellectual absorption.

“Number four.”

There being no expostulation, a search ensued for the key. It developed that Room Number Four was opened by Key Number Seven, which—in conformity to some system altogether baffling to a Gringo—was usually kept on Peg Number Thirteen, but had been misplaced by some careless servant. The little proprietor waved both hands in the air.

“What *mozos!*” he exclaimed. “No sense of orderliness whatsoever!”

A prolonged search resulted, however, in its discovery, and the proprietor himself led the way back through a succession of *patios*, or interior gardens, the front ones embellished with orange trees, and the rear ones with rubbish barrels, to Room Number Four, from which the lock had long ago been broken.

It was a large apartment, with brick floor. It contained a canvas cot, a wobbly chair, and an aged bureau distinguished for its sticky drawers, an air of lost grandeur, and a burnt-wood effect achieved by the cigarette butts of many generations of guests. The bare walls were ornamented only by a placard, containing a set of rules—printed in wholesale quantities for whatever hotels craved the enhanced dignity of elaborate regulations—proclaiming, among other things, that occupants must comport themselves with strict morality.

“One of our very choicest rooms, *señor,*” smiled

the proprietor, as he withdrew. "It has a window."

A window did improve it.

From the narrow street outside came the soft voices of *peons*, the sing-song call of a lottery-ticket vender, the tread of sandaled feet, the clatter of hoofs from a passing burro train laden with bullion from distant mines, the guttural protesting cry of the drivers, all in the exotic symphony of a foreign land.

Yet there was a calm, subdued note about the chorus. In Mexico, a newly arrived Gringo expected melodrama. It was disconcerting to find only peace.

An Indian maiden, straight as an arrow, swung past with the flat-footed stride of the shoeless classes, balancing an earthenware jar upon her dark head. A fat old lady cantered by upon a tiny donkey, perched precariously upon the extreme stern. A little brown runt of a man staggered past under a gigantic wooden table. Another staggered past under the influence of alcohol. Women on their way to market stopped to offer me their wares. Did I wish to buy a chicken or a watermelon? Would I care for a bouquet of yucca lilies? Or an umbrella? If not an umbrella, a second-hand guitar?

"No?" They seemed surprised and disappointed. But they smiled politely. "*Gracias* just the same, *señor! Adios!*"

An ice cream vender made his rounds with a slap

of leather sandals, balancing atop his *sombrero* a dripping freezer. He stopped before a patron to dish the slushy mixture into a cracked glass, pushing it off the spoon with a dirty finger, and licking the spoon clean before he dropped it back into the can. From one pocket he produced bottles and poured coloring matter over the concoction—scarlet, green, and purple. Then he swung his burden aloft, and continued on his way, chanting, “I carry snow! I carry snow!”

Even the cries of a peddler were soft and gentle here. I was about to turn from the window, when around the corner came a strange procession of mournful men and wailing women, led by three coffins balanced, like every other species of baggage in this country, upon the heads of *peons*. Mexico was Mexico after all! Here was evidence of melodrama! Excitedly I hailed the proprietor.

“A bandit attack, *señor*? No, indeed. José Santos Dominguez had a christening at his house last night. Purely a family affair, *señor*! Nothing more.”

II

After the dusty railway journey I craved a bath.

From a doorway across the *patio* a legend beckoned with the inscription of “*Baños.*” I called an Indian servant-maid, pointed at the legend, strug-



A BURRO TRAIN LADEN WITH BULLION FROM THE MINES

gled with Spanish, and finally secured a towel. The bath-room door, like that of my room, had long ago lost its lock. Searching among the several tin cans which littered one corner, I found a stick which evidently was used for propping against the door by such bathers as desired privacy. Having undressed, I leaped jubilantly into the huge, old-fashioned tub; and turned on the water. There *was* no water. Poking modest head and shoulders around the edge of the door, I looked for the maid. She eventually made her appearance, as servants will, even in Mexico, and regarded me suspiciously from a safe distance.

“No, *señor*, there is no water. You asked for a towel. You did not mention that you wished also a bath.”

“Well, for the love of Mike, when—”

“*Mañana, señor*. Always in the morning there is water.”

And so, after supper and a stroll in the *plaza*, I retired, still coated with Sonora desert, to my room. There was some difficulty in locating the electric button, since another careless *mozo* had backed the bureau against it. There was also some difficulty in arranging the mosquito net over my bed. It hung from the ceiling by a slender cord which immediately broke in the pulley. I piled a chair on top of a cot, climbed up and mended the string, climbed down and lowered the net to the proper height, unfolded it, and

discovered that it was full of gaping holes through which not only a mosquito but possibly a small ostrich could have flown with comfort and security. Finally, beginning to feel that the charm of Mexico had been vastly overrated by previous writers, I retired, prepared to fight mosquitos, and discovered that there *were* no mosquitos in Hermosillo.

In the morning, rejuvenated and reënergized, I again waylaid the Indian servant-maid.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, as though it were a new idea. “The *señor* wishes a bath? Why not? *Momentito! Momentito!*”

“*Momentito*” is Spanish for “Keep your shirt on!” or “Don’t raise hell about it!” or more literally “In the tiny fraction of a moment!” It suggests to the native mind a lightning-like speed, even more than does “*Mañana.*”

And eventually I did get the bath. There was some delay while the water was heated, and more delay while the maid carried it, a kettleful at a time, from the kitchen to the bathroom, but the last kettle was ready by the time the rest had cooled, and I finally emerged refreshed, to discover again that in Mexico the unexpected always happens.

When I pulled out the old sock used as a stopper, the water ran out upon the bath-room floor, and disappeared down a gutter, carrying with it the shoes I had left beside the tub.

III

But Hermosillo possessed a charm which even a Mexican bath could not destroy.

It was a sleepy little city, typically Mexican, basking beneath a warm blue sky. It stood in a fertile oasis of the desert, and all about it were groves of orange trees. Its massive-walled buildings had once been painted a violent red or green or yellow, but time and weather had softened the barbaric colors until now they suggested the tints of some old Italian masterpiece. And although ancient bullet holes scarred its dwellings, there hung over the Moorish streets to-day a restful atmosphere of tranquillity.

At noon the merchants closed their shops, and every one indulged in the national *siesta*. The only exception was an American—a quiet, determined-looking man—who kept walking up and down the hotel *patio* with quick, nervous tread.

“Somebody just down from the States?” I asked the proprietor.

“No, *señor*. He is the manager of mines in the Yaqui country. One of his trucks is missing, and he fears lest Indians have attacked it.”

Such a contingency, in sleepy Hermosillo, sounded quite absurd. It was the most peaceful-appearing town in all the world. As the *siesta* hour drew to a close, the *señoritas* commenced to show themselves,

dressed and powdered for their evening stroll in the *plaza*. They were dainty, feminine creatures, not always pretty, yet invariably with a gentle womanliness that gave them charm. Upon the streets they passed a man with modestly downcast head. Behind the bars of a window and emboldened by a sense of security, they favored him with a roguish smile from the depths of languorous dark eyes, and sometimes with a softly murmured, "*Adios!*"

I drifted toward the *plaza*, wondering how a Free-Lance Newspaper Correspondent were to earn a living in any country so outwardly unexciting as Mexico, and dropped disgustedly into a bench beside another young American.

He was a rosy-cheeked, cherubic-appearing lad. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles, and his neatly-plastered hair was parted in the middle. Like myself, he was dressed in a newly-purchased palm-beach suit. His name was Eustace. He, too, was just out of the army. He had enlisted, he explained, in the hope that he might live down a reputation as a model youth. And the War Department had given him a tame job on the Mexican border, cleaning out the cages of the signal-corps pigeons. Wherefore he was now journeying into foreign fields in the hope of satisfying himself with some mild form of adventure.

Very solemnly we shook hands.

"I couldn't quite go back to cub-reporting," he

explained. "So I decided to become a free-lance newspaper correspondent."

Even more solemnly we shook hands again. Since neither of us actually expected that any editor would publish what we sent him, we formed a partnership upon the spot. The Expedition had a new recruit. And together we mourned the disappointing peacefulness of Hermosillo.

Evening descended upon the *plaza*. A circle of lights appeared around the rickety little bandstand. An orchestra played. The *señoritas* strolled past us, arm in arm, while stately *Dons* and solemn *Doñas* maintained a watchful chaperonage from the benches. The night deepened. The cathedral clock struck ten. *Dons*, *Doñas*, and *señoritas* disappeared in the direction of home. The *gendarmes* alone remained. Each muffled his throat as a precaution against night air, and each set a lantern in the center of a street crossing. From all sides came the sound of iron bars sliding into place behind heavy doors. Hermosillo was going to bed.

As we, also, turned homeward, our footsteps rang loudly through the silent streets. A policeman unmuffled his throat and bade us "Good night." Then he produced a tin whistle and blew a melancholy little toot, to inform the policeman on the next corner that he was still awake. From *gendarme* to *gendarme* the signal passed, the plaintive wail seeming to say, "All's well."

A beggar huddled in a doorway hid his cigarette beneath his ragged blanket at our approach, and held out his hand. A lone wayfarer, lingering upon the sidewalk before a window, turned to glance at us, and to bid us "*Adios.*" Through the bars a girl's radiant face shone out of the darkness. Then the man's voice trailed after us, singing very softly to the throbbing of a guitar. A moon peeped over the edge of the low flat roofs—a very aged and battered-looking moon, with a greenish tinge like that of the old silver bells in Hermosillo's ancient cathedral—a moon which, like the city below it, suggested that it once had known troublous days, yet was now at perfect peace.

This was a delightful land, but to a pair of Free-Lance Newspaper Correspondents—

As we entered the wide-arched portals of the hotel, the telephone struck a jarring note. The American mining man, still pacing nervously up and down the *patio*, leaped to the receiver.

"Laughlin speaking! What news? Did they—? Shot them both? White and Garcia both? Get the troops out! I'll be there in just—"

IV

In an instant Eustace and I were at his elbow.

Ours was the newspaperman's unsentimental eagerness, which might have hailed the burning of

an orphan asylum with its four hundred helpless inmates as splendid front-page copy. Here was murder! This was Mexico! *Viva Mexico!* Here was our first story!

“No time to talk!” snapped Laughlin. “I’ll send John Luy for you in the morning. He’ll take you to La Colorada, in the Yaqui country itself. You’ll get the dope there!”

And he vanished down the street. We stood at the hotel gate, a little startled, gazing out into the night. The moon smiled down over low, flat roofs, and a man’s voice drifted to us, singing very softly to the throbbing of a guitar, and the plaintive note of a *gendarme’s* whistle seemed to say, “All’s well.”

CHAPTER IV

AMONG THE YAQUI INDIANS

I

JOHN LUY met us in an elderly Buick early the next morning.

He was a stocky man in khaki and corduroy, a man of fifty or sixty, with slightly gray hair, and the keen, friendly eyes of the Westerner. He was a trifle deaf from listening to so many revolutions, and questions had to be repeated.

“Heh? Oh, the holes in the wind-shield? They’re only bullet holes.”

He motioned us into the back seat, grasped the wheel, and drove us out through the suburbs of Hermosillo into the open desert. The road was nothing more than the track of cars which had crossed the plains before us. Sometimes it led through wide expanses of dull reddish sand; sometimes the cactus and mesquite grew in thorny forests up to the very edge of the narrow trail.

It was a country alive with all the creeping, crawling things that supply local color for magazine fiction. Swift brown lizards shot from our path, starting apparently at full speed, and zigzagging through

the yucca like tiny streaks of lightning. Chipmunks and ground squirrels dived into their burrows at our approach. A rattler lifted its head, hissed a warning, and retired with leisurely dignity. Jack-rabbits popped up from nowhere in particular and scampered into the brush, laying their ears flat against the head, running a dozen steps and finally bouncing away in a series of long, frantic leaps. Chaparral cocks, locally known as road-runners, sped along the trail before us, keeping about fifty feet ahead of the car, wiggling their tails in mocking challenge, slackening their pace whenever we slackened ours, speeding whenever we speeded, and shooting away into the mesquite in a low, jumping flight as John stepped on the gas.

Now and then we passed a mound of rocks surmounted by a crude wooden cross, and once we saw the wreck of what had been another automobile.

“Heh?” asked John. “Oh! Graves. People shot by Yaqui Indians. Oh, yes, quite a few of them. Quite a few.”

He gave the wheel a twist, and we plunged down a steep slope into a deep, sandy river-bed. The car lumbered through it, sinking to the hubs. In the very center it came to an abrupt stop. John picked up a rifle.

“One of you lads take the gun and lay out in the brush. This is the kind of place where White got *his*.”

Eustace seized the weapon, and crawled into the cactus, while I worked savagely to dig the wheels from their two-foot layer of soft, beach-like sand. John, puffing complacently at his corn-cob pipe, tried the self-starter again and again without success, meanwhile giving me the details of White's murder:

“It was an arroyo exactly like this one. Exactly like this one. He come around a bend in his truck, and hit the waterhole, and was plowing through it when a dozen Mausers blazed out'n the cactus. Three bullets hit him square in the head. Maybe Garcia, his mechanic, got it on the first volley, too. You couldn't be sure—so the fellows said over the telephone. The Yaquis had cut him up and shoved sticks through him 'til his own mother couldn't've recognized him. Dig the sand away from that other wheel, will you?”

II

I breathed more freely half an hour later, when we climbed the farther bank of the river-course, and rattled on again, through ever-thickening forests of cactus, to the low adobe city of La Colorada.

John showed us a nondescript mud dwelling that passed for a hotel, and we presently sallied therefrom, with paper and pencil, fully convinced that the pleasantest method of securing copy would be that

of sitting on the village hitching post and listening to the experiences of some one else.

There were half a dozen other Americans in La Colorada. It had once been the home of gold mines from which heavily-guarded mule trains carried away a hundred and eight millions of dollars in bullion, but revolutionists had destroyed the machinery during the turbulent years that led up to the Carranza régime, and the town now served only as a depot for the big motor trucks which ran through hostile Yaqui country to mines farther in the interior. The half dozen Americans were the drivers of these trucks. The eldest of them was under thirty, but most of them had knocked about the far corners of the earth since childhood, and all of them surveyed with undisguised contempt the little thirty-two-caliber automatics we carried.

“If you was to shoot me with one of them things, and I was ever to find it out,” said Dugan, a lad of twenty, “I’d be downright peeved about it.”

Dugan stood over six feet in height. His jaw resembled the Rock of Gibraltar, and his hair suggested Vesuvius in eruption. His favorite literature, I suspected, was the biography of Jesse James. He carried a forty-four in a soft-leather holster cut wide to facilitate a quick draw. His great ambition was to “shoot up” a saloon, and since there was no bar-room in La Colorada, he had recently compro-

mised upon the local drug-stores, and had blazed holes through the pharmacist's castor-oil bottles.

All of these youths had encountered the Yaquis. One showed us a dozen bullet-dents in his truck, mementos of a brush with Indians on his last trip. Another had been captured, stripped of his clothing, and chased naked back to town. But of the latest incident—the murder of White and Garcia—they could give us little information. W. E. Laughlin was supposed to have an understanding with the Yaqui chiefs whereby his property and his employees were protected.

“He pays 'em so much a year to leave him alone. He's never had any trouble before this. A year ago one of his drivers was shot—Al Farrel—but it wasn't Yaquis. It was a gang of Mexican soldiers. They robbed the truck and blamed it on the Indians, and went scouting all over the country pretending to chase the guys that did it. Maybe the same thing has happened again.”

“That's about it,” echoed another. “The Yaquis hold us up, but it's the Greasers they've got it in for. We get off light—usually. They just rob us. When they catch a Mex, they rip his clothes off and chuck him into the cactus, or cut the soles off his feet and make him dance on the hot sand.”

But the others disagreed. It was merely border tradition that the Yaquis treated Americans better than Mexicans. There was the case of Otto, the

draft-dodger, who came to La Colorada to avoid the war, only to be caught by the Indians and tortured to death. There was the story of One-Legged Joe, who went prospecting just outside of town, and of whom nothing was found except the wooden leg, charred with fire. And there was the tragedy of Pedro Lehr, who left his ranch near Hermosillo for a few hours, and returned to find his entire family slain, with the exception of a sixteen-year-old daughter whom the Yaquis had carried away with them.

Pleased at our eager interest, the truck-drivers warmed toward us. Only Dugan remained aloof, grinning a trifle contemptuously. Eustace turned to him:

“What can *you* tell us?”

“What do you want to know?”

“Well, for a starter, how do you feel when you ride through hostile Indian country on a truck-load of dynamite?”

Dugan spat eloquently upon the ground. Then he pointed toward two loaded trucks that stood in the road before us.

“MacFarlane over there is going out to a mine to-morrow. If you want to know how it feels, go along with him. He’s carrying six hundred pounds of dynamite.”

III

Since he put it *that* way, we sought out MacFarlane.

He was a tall, lean-faced man—one of the quiet, self-possessed, determined-looking mine superintendents usually encountered in Mexico. He was about to make a week's trip to *El Progreso* mine, sixty miles farther in the interior. He would be glad to take us along.

And at dawn the following day, we rode out of La Colorada in one of MacFarlane's trucks. We sat upon a miscellaneous assortment of machinery, provisions, and blasting powder, with a crew of twenty hired gunmen, each of whom wore several hundred yards of cartridge belt draped around his waist and criss-crossed over his shoulders in the approved Mexican style.

The desert seemed a trifle more forbidding than the one we had crossed the day before. When we were in the open our gunmen laughed and chatted together; when we approached the forests of yucca and mesquite, I noticed that they grew silent and watchful. But no sound came from the vast expanse of wasteland except the peaceful song of the locusts.

At rare intervals we passed a native village—a cluster of mud hovels surrounding an aged white church—and our advent created a sensation. A host of mongrel dogs but slightly removed from the



INDIAN WOMEN, POUNDING CLOTHES UPON THE ROCKS BESIDE A SHALLOW BROOK, CEASED THEIR WORK TO STARE



LA COLORADA, ONCE THE HOME OF GOLD MINES, NOW SERVED ONLY AS A DEPOT FOR TRUCKS THAT CROSSED THE DESERT

coyote stage hailed us with furious yelps. Children raced barefoot beside the trucks to get a better view of us. Half-naked Indian women, pounding clothes upon the flat rocks beside a shallow brook, ceased their work to stare at us. Even the adult male population, reclining against the shady side of the adobe dwellings, sat up to look at us.

There was something in these tiny hamlets that recalled pictures of the Holy Land. Civilization had changed but little here since the days of the Aztecs, and despite the excitement caused by our passage, there was an air of sleepiness about the whole place which suggested another continent, a million miles farther from Broadway. So perfect was the scene that I resented the sight of a Standard Oil tin used as a water-jar, and felt distinctly offended when I heard the click of a Singer sewing machine issuing from a tiny, cactus-roofed hut.

The natives here showed little Spanish ancestry. Their features were purely Indian. A few, by their prominent cheek-bones and dark complexion, suggested a trace of Yaqui blood, but most of them were of other tribes, and all carried arms as a precaution against Yaqui raids. Every one wore a large knife, and in an open-air barber shop one native with a six-shooter on his belt was shaving another who held a rifle across his knees. All of them greeted us with the cry:

“Have you met any Yaquis?”

The day passed without incident, however, and nightfall brought us to our first stopping-place, the village of Matape, another cluster of mud hovels surrounding an ancient white church.

A buxom Indian woman, who operated a hotel on those rare occasions when visitors came to town, served us *frijoles* and *tortillas*—beans and cornmeal pancakes—and produced from its hiding place a bottle of fiery *mescal*. Later, when we had consumed the meal by the light of a flickering oil lamp, her daughter joined us with a guitar, and while MacFarlane watched his gunmen to see that no one kept the bottle too long inverted over his black moustachios, the girl sang to us. Still later, after she herself had sampled the potent Mexican liquor, she danced. She was rather comely, in a stolid Indian way, but she was much too heavy and graceless for complete success as a *danseuse*, even after two swigs of such inspiring stuff as *mescal*. The gunmen, however, found it highly diverting. They pushed back their chairs to clear a stage for her, and watched her with the pleased expression which a Mexican always wears when looking at a woman. The guitar twanged a weird, savage melody; the dim light from the swinging lantern shone upon a sea of dark faces, and reflected from a score of gleaming eyes; in the center of the crowded room the girl danced awkwardly, her bare feet pounding monotonously upon the mud floor.

As she finally sank, flushed and panting, upon a bench, her mother favored us with a toothless grin:

“For one hundred dollars gold I sell her!”

Eustace shook his head.

“She’s scarcely an essential part of a newspaper correspondent’s equipment.”

“Seventy-five!” persisted the woman.

“That’s a special rate,” exclaimed MacFarlane. “She lacks one ear. They say her last husband bit it off before chasing her home with a club. Of course, you can’t believe everything you hear. But you’d better turn in. To-morrow we travel on mule-back.”

IV

The trucks were to continue, with the guard, by the longer road to the mine. MacFarlane and ourselves, with two of the gunmen, were to ride over the mountains. The bridle trail led through questionable territory, but it was shorter.

Neither Eustace nor I had ever ridden a mule before. Both of us had read Western fiction, and had noted that the hero not only loved his steed, but left nearly everything to the animal’s good judgment, and that the noble beast, appreciating and reciprocating his master’s affection and trust, invariably anticipated his every wish, and carried the hero out of every conceivable difficulty.

We had just discussed the matter, and had determined to encourage the same fond relationship with our prospective mounts, when MacFarlane rode up to the hotel with the five most woebegone-looking specimens of quadrupeds that we had ever seen.

“Cut a good big stick,” he advised.

Two minutes after mounting, I welcomed the suggestion. It seemed inhuman to beat anything so small as that mule, but the animal appeared not to mind it in the least. The moment I ceased whaling him, he assumed that this was where I wished to stop. His one virtue was that no matter how often he stumbled on the edge of a precipice, he never fell over.

“When you come to a tight place,” warned MacFarlane, “let the mule use his own judgment.”

And there were plenty of tight places. Hour after hour the path twisted through narrow ravines, along deep water-courses strewn with bowlders, down sandy embankments where the animals slid like toboggans, around narrow cliffs, and up sharp inclines where they fairly leaped from rock to rock. It was a gloriously desolate country, hideous perhaps, yet awesome in its ugly grandeur. Mountains reared themselves above the trail, covered sometimes with huge candelabra cactus, but usually bare and towering skyward like the battlements of a gigantic fortress. So fascinating was the whole panorama that four of us rode across a valley a full

mile in length before we discovered that Eustace had disappeared.

MacFarlane stopped abruptly.

“Good Lord! I told him to keep close to us! Four months ago one of my men dropped behind, and they nabbed him so quietly we never heard a sound!”

He was off his mule in an instant, and leading the way on foot, revolver in hand, while I followed at his heels, both of us crouching behind bowlders as we hurried back along the path we had traversed. Turning a bend, we found Eustace sitting on his mule at the top of a sandy decline, complacently smoking a cigar.

“What the devil are you doing?” snapped MacFarlane.

“Tight place,” said Eustace. “I’m letting the mule use his own judgment.”

“Hell!” growled MacFarlane. “The mule’s gone to sleep!”

And throughout the day he lectured us upon the fallacies of the S.P.C.A. spirit as applied to Mexican mules, all the way to Suaqui de Batuc, another mud-village at the junction of the Yaqui and Moctezuma Rivers, where we were to spend another night.

There was no hotel in this town, but we found lodgings with an Indian family. A woman brought us the inevitable *frijoles* and *tortillas*, gave us water to drink which tasted as though it had been inhabited by frogs, and ushered us to one large bed which un-

doubtedly *was* inhabited by everything except frogs. The name of the town, I learned, when translated from the Indian, meant something which could be printed only in French. As I scratched myself to sleep, I reflected upon the appropriateness of the name. I had just succeeded in closing my eyes when a volley of pistol shots sounded outside the window. Eustace and I bumped heads in a frantic dive to locate the automatics beneath our pillow.

“Don’t worry,” said MacFarlane. “It’s a gang of drunks. This is a Saint’s Day, and the faithful are celebrating.”

v

In the morning, before continuing the journey, I set out to secure a few photographs.

“Ask permission before you snap a native,” the mining man warned me. “Some of them are superstitious—have an idea that they’ll die within a year if you take their picture. They killed the last photographer that tried it.”

So I took special pains to ask permission. Invariably they said, “No!” Some appeared to regard the camera as a new species of machine gun. Even those who knew what it was were reticent about posing. The more picturesque the native, and the more I wished his picture, the more resolutely he said, “NO!”

Strolling some distance from town, I finally discovered an aged squaw who looked as though she might die within a year even though her photograph were not taken. But her "NO!" was not merely in capital letters but in type larger than the largest in a Hearst newspaper. Still, I could not resist that picture. She was standing in the center of the shallow river, filling deer-skin water-sacks and loading them upon the back of a moth-eaten little burro. But since the sun shone directly in my lens, I had to pass her. And the moment I unslung my camera, she started to walk upstream directly into the light. The faster *I* walked, the faster *she* walked. I broke into a trot, and she broke into a trot, dragging the burro after her, and splashing water over the two of us. I felt a trifle undignified, but I had determined to have that picture, and I increased my pace to a run. Thereupon she gathered her skirts about her waist and sprinted like an intercollegiate champion.

From the village behind us came a series of war-whoops. I looked back to see the entire population joining in the chase. Suddenly I realized that my behavior *was* undignified. Some fifty angry natives were rushing toward me, waving in the air an assortment of weapons that might have delighted a collector of antiques, but which at the moment gave me no cause whatsoever for rejoicing. I stopped and faced them, trying vainly to explain my conduct in

my inadequate Spanish, while they shook their fists, and waved knives in the air, and jabbered furiously.

Eustace came to my rescue. Two years and eight sweethearts upon the border had given him a fluent command of the language.

“They’ve misjudged your intentions,” he chuckled, after he had calmed the mob. “I’ve explained it all. This old geezer with the four whiskers on his chin is her man, and he says he’ll let you take her picture for two pesos. I suppose he’s tired of her, and doesn’t care whether she croaks or not.”

But the squaw evidently valued her life at more than two pesos. For she gathered up her skirts once more, and fled away down the river, dragging the burro behind her.

VI

It was but a few hours’ ride from Suaqui to *El Progreso* Mine. It lay in the center of a ragged, bowl-shaped valley in the heart of the mountains, some ninety miles from the railroad—a group of gaping shafts beside a stone blockhouse, with a village of thatched laborers’ quarters straggling along a sandy, cactus-hedged street.

Some half dozen American bosses occupied the blockhouse. The native workmen numbered about two hundred, most of them Pimas and *mestizos*., or mixed-breeds.

“Don’t shoot at any rattlesnakes,” MacFarlane warned us, “or you’ll see everybody dropping work and running for headquarters to resist attack.”

The mine itself had never been threatened by the Yaquis, but on several occasions they had attempted to ambush the provision trucks. Like most of the mines in Mexico, *El Progreso* was not the sort where one had merely to walk out with a pick and chop large pieces of silver off a convenient mountain side; before a single speck of mineral could be extracted, it had been necessary to transport across the desert a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of machinery; every bit of it had been brought over the long trail on truck or muleback, and the journey of every train had meant the possibility of a fight with Indians.

The Yaquis of Sonora are closely related to the Apaches of our own border-country. From the earliest coming of the white man, they have resented the invasion of their domain. The Spaniards were never able to conquer them. Porfirio Diaz, who pacified all the rest of Mexico, could never make the Yaquis recognize the sovereignty of the Mexican government over their territory. He sent expedition after expedition against them, depleted their ranks by constant warfare, and took thousands of prisoners whom he shipped to far-off Yucatan to labor as virtual slaves upon the henequin plantations. But the atrocities of the Diaz soldiers merely

aggravated the Indians' hatred of their would-be rulers.

From time to time, in more recent years, groups of Yaquis have made their peace with the Mexican authorities. Many of them, known as "*manzos*" in distinction from the "*bravos*" in the hills, are to be found in every Sonoran village and even in Arizona. As soldiers, they are the bravest in Mexico, and as laborers the most industrious. But they were never especially friendly to Carranza, and in his era, although some served in the federal army, they frequently did so in order to obtain arms or ammunition for their own use. Soldiers one day, they were apt to be bandits the next.

Although the Yaquis had first declared war upon the invading white man with every possible justification, they had been forced, through years of constant retreat into the unfertile recesses of the desert, to prey upon the invaders for a living. Although their original grievance had been against the Mexican, bandits can not be choosers. And the miners at *El Progreso* were always on the watch.

"It's a bad time just now," one man explained. "They all get together for a big hullabaloo every Easter, and drink a lot of mescal, and get so enthusiastic that they start out for a few more scalps."

VII

I had witnessed the Easter ceremony of the Yaqui Indians before leaving the border.

Strange as it may sound, the Yaqui is a Christian. Years ago the Spanish missionaries, the greatest adventurers in all history, penetrated the Sonora desert where warriors feared to tread, and finding themselves unable to converse with the Indians, enacted their message in sign language. To-day, at Easter time, the Yaquis reënact the same story, distorted by their own barbaric conception of it until it is but a semi-savage burlesque upon the Passion Play.

In the *manzo* settlement at Nogales, the Christ was represented by a cheap rag doll, garbed in brilliantly colored draperies, and cradled in a wicker basket beneath a thatched roof. The ceremonies lasted from Good Friday until after Easter Sunday, and during that time the Indians neither ate nor slept, refreshing themselves only with *mescal*.

The native conception of the life of Christ was that of a continual warfare with Judas. To make the odds harder for Him, they had six assistant Judases, selected—I was told—from the young braves who had committed the most sins during the current year.

“We have several,” explained an intelligent old

Indian, "because my people could not respect a Savior who allowed himself to be licked by any one man."

The Judases appeared in startling devil masks, and for three days they capered before the Infant, contorting their semi-naked bodies, howling like fiends, poking Him with sticks, spitting upon Him, kissing Him in mockery, and challenging Him to come out and fight. About the cradle the women of the tribe sat cross-legged upon the ground, wailing a strange Indian hymn that rose and fell in plaintive minor key. A tomtom pounded monotonously. Night descended, and the fires threw weird, fantastic shadows upon the reddened mountain sides. Hour after hour, and day after day, the barbaric orgy continued, until on Easter Sunday the tribe rose in defense of the Christ, seized the Judases and carried them to the fire, where they pretended to burn them. Afterwards, they carried the image of the Savior in mournful procession to a little grave behind the village. It was a ridiculous travesty upon religion, yet one could not laugh. There was a solemnity in the faces of these people, as they followed the rag doll to its burial place. Many of the women were weeping. The men bared their heads, and there was true reverence in the dark, savage eyes. The capering of the devil-dancers had been ludicrous, yet now I found myself strangely impressed. And, anyhow, it is inadvisable to laugh at religious



THE CHRIST WAS REPRESENTED BY A CHEAP RAG DOLL CRADLED IN
A WICKER BASKET



FOR THREE DAYS THE INDIANS NEITHER ATE NOR SLEPT, REFRESHING
THEMSELVES ONLY WITH MESCAL

fanatics—especially if they happen to be Yaqui Indians.

VIII

The same ceremony is practiced, with variations in ritual, by the *bravos* in the hills.

Frequently, as the miner had suggested, it serves as a get-together for the Spring raiding season. Spring is harvest-time in southern Sonora, and an ideal time for the Yaquis to sweep down from the mountains and pillage the valleys which the Mexicans have taken from them. In the days of Carranza, the Indians not only invaded the rural districts, but carried their raids to the very outskirts of Guaymas and Hermosillo.

Word came to us at *El Progreso* that a band of the Indians was operating not far away. They had attacked several of the neighboring villages, and had visited the *Gavilan* Mine, another American concern in our district, where they had done the miners no bodily harm, but had left them without clothing or provisions.

“When we start back to-morrow, we’ll travel by night,” decided MacFarlane. “The Yaquis are superstitious about the crosses along the trail. The ghosts of the murdered men are supposed to be out for revenge after dark. That’s the safest time to travel.”

IX

We left at sunset, a little party of five.

As we rode silently toward the vague mountains ahead, their peaks became a magic crimson that deepened slowly to purple against a silver sky. We passed Suaqui, where the rivers gleamed like shining ribbons in the last faint twilight. Then the swift desert night was upon us, and we were riding into a deep pass, where the air grew strangely chill.

I can recall every minute of that long night. Perhaps the mule could see the path. I couldn't. Now and then, as we ascended, I caught a momentary glimpse of the rider ahead, looming abnormally large against the sky. Usually I listened to the crunch of hoofs upon the gravel, and followed close behind. One had the sensation of being about to enter a tunnel into which the other riders had disappeared. When the faint moonlight seeped down into the pass, it converted each cactus into the semblance of a crouching Yaqui. And despite MacFarlane's assertion that night travel was comparatively safe, neither he nor the others were taking chances. The howl of a coyote or the cooing of a dove brought every revolver out of its holster, for these noises, although common enough in the mountains, are sometimes used by the Indians as signals. Once, when something trailed us for half a mile through

the brush, we all rode half-turned in the saddle, covering the spot where the twigs crackled. It was probably some animal—perhaps a mountain lion—following us out of curiosity, but we watched it, lest it prove a bandit.

Hour after hour we rode in silence through the black defiles. We knew whether we were ascending or descending only from the slant of the mule's back. The nervous strain seemed to affect even the animals. When we paused at a mountain stream to water them, my own beast suddenly lashed at me with his heels, and bolted. I chased him several hundred yards up the ragged bed of the water-course, stumbling over slippery stones, and splashing into the pools until I finally captured him, both of us making enough noise—it seemed to me—to awaken any Yaqui within a mile.

And within a mile, we turned a bend, and found ourselves in the very center of an encampment! A score of camp-fires, dwindled to smoldering red ashes, lined the trail, and about them, as though they were the spokes of a wheel, a group of men were sleeping with feet toward the blaze, in Yaqui fashion, each man with a rifle beside him. Not a sentry had stopped us. Even as I realized where we were, I found that my mule was stepping over the recumbent figures.

One of the men awoke, yawned, and raised himself on an elbow to stare at us.

“Who are you?” demanded MacFarlane in Spanish.

“Federal soldiers,” and the man composed himself for another nap.

x

We rode into Matape at dawn, and a truck carried us back to La Colorada. Dugan offered his hand.

“I done you an injustice, pardners. I thought you’d be scared.”

Eustace and I, exchanging confidences in private, agreed that Dugan had done neither of us an injustice, but we kept this to ourselves.

John Luy, driving us back to Hermosillo in his Buick, seemed highly amused about the whole affair. He chuckled to himself for a long time before he spoke:

“It’s funny! Mack don’t usually make that ride at night. He did it to give you guys a thrill, and I suspect he got a thrill himself. Laughlin’s been investigating that last murder, you know. It was Yaquis that done it, but a bunch of Yaquis serving as federal soldiers. Lucky they were asleep without sentries last night when you fellows rode through.”

CHAPTER V

DOWN THE WEST COAST

I

ON the train that carried me southward from Hermosillo I met "The General."

He was young—scarcely out of his teens—slender, mild-mannered, almost feminine in voice and appearance. His large, dark eyes were shaded with long, girlish lashes. One felt startled when, upon more intimate acquaintance, he confided that he was an ex-bandit.

His rank, in reality, was only that of *teniente*, than which one could not be much lower in a Mexican army, but it pleased him so much when I first addressed him as "General" that I continued the practice.

Our meeting was accidental. Eustace and I, still traveling together, found him in a double-seat, with his handbags spread over whatever space he did not fill himself. As we paused before him, he looked up in surprise, apparently feeling that the railway had not made proper provision for so many passengers.

"Pardon, *General*, but is this bench reserved?"

He smiled. He removed his baggage most graciously. Within half an hour he had announced himself our humble servant, and was planning gay parties for us at the several stopping places ahead. He knew all the girls along the West Coast, he said, both respectable and otherwise. He would see that we enjoyed the trip. He would be our guide and mentor in things Mexican. And when we reached Mazatlán—the southern terminus of the road, some three or four days distant—*his* house would be *our* house. We should attend his wedding, which was to be celebrated immediately upon his arrival, and if we remained long enough, we should be the god-fathers to his first child.

And although he impressed me as somewhat too lavish in his promises, he proved an entertaining companion on the long journey—a journey through a monotonous continuation of the Sonora desert, with stop-overs at cities which, with minor variations, were replicas of Hermosillo—at Guaymas, San Blas, and Culiacán—cities pleasant and interesting, yet never so interesting to me as my first Mexican friend, the little General.

II

The young *teniente* was typical in many ways not only of the Mexicans, but of most of the Latin-Americans.

He lived completely in the present, with scarcely a thought of the morrow. For him *tempus* did not *fugit*, save very rarely, and even then there was sure to be more *tempus* afterward.

He had unlimited time for friendliness and politeness. In his friendliness he was prone to those professions of love which to the Anglo-Saxon mind savor of hypocrisy; in his politeness he was inclined toward phraseology that suggested figurative language; yet if this were hypocrisy, it was tempered with self-deception, and the phraseology was intended frankly as figurative language.

If he sometimes lacked veracity, it was because his code of etiquette called not for the truth, but for some statement that would give more satisfaction than the truth. Seldom thinking beyond the immediate present, he apparently did not reflect that an ultimate discovery of reality might bring disappointment greater than the original satisfaction.

One encounters this mental habit everywhere in Latin America. If one inquires of a fellow-passenger whether he is nearing his destination, he invariably is assured that he is, although a half-day's journey may confront him. If one asks a hotel servant whether laundry may be washed before to-morrow night, he invariably learns that it may, although the servant knows perfectly well that the laundress will not call until the day after to-morrow.

In Guaymas, our first stopping-place, the General

was to meet us in the Plaza at three o'clock to take us to visit his uncle. At about five, we bumped into him accidentally upon the street.

"*Amigos!*" he cried delightedly, enfolding each of us in a Latin embrace. "So glad I am to see you! I wish to take you to visit my uncle."

"You were going to do that at three."

"So I was! So I was! I was on my way to the *plaza*, but I met a friend, and we had two or three drinks of *tequila*, and I forgot all about it!"

He spoke not in apology. He merely offered what he considered a satisfactory explanation. To him, as to most Mexicans, an engagement was merely a tentative agreement, to prove binding only in the event that neither party forget it or happen to be doing something else at the appointed hour. He was delightfully free from any troublesome sense of obligation. While an Anglo-Saxon would rise each morning, taking mental inventory of the many things to be done during the next sixteen hours, the Mexican solved life's problems by merely reflecting, "Here's another pleasant day!"

Having met us upon the street, the General promptly forgot the date he had made with some one else, and took us to call upon his uncle. His uncle was not at home.

III

The Mexican is by nature impractical. When he makes a promise, he usually means it. Afterwards he discovers that he has promised something which he can not fulfill.

“To-night,” said the General, “I shall arrange a dance in your honor.”

And this time, he did meet us at the appointed hour—or soon thereafter. He had with him the musicians, two barefooted *peons* with mandolin and guitar, and we started again for his uncle’s residence. Everything was ready for the dance except that the uncle had not been informed that he was to be the host, or that any such affair was to transpire.

The General, however, was determined that we should have a good time. We were duly presented to a middle-class family of a dozen or more individuals, all eager to be friendly, but all a trifle embarrassed. The musicians played some dance that had long since faded from popularity north of the border—it was either “Smiles” or “Hindustan,” which are still the rage in Mexico—and the General made the rounds in search of a partner. In turn he offered his arm to each of his cousins—three rather shy little olive-faced girls of thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen—while each in turn pleaded:

“I don’t know how to dance. I wish I did.”

He finally discovered a stout, middle-aged lady who professed some slight knowledge of terpsichore, and marched with her thrice about the room, as is the fashion in Latin America. Then he seized her manfully, and sped away in a two-step. The lady, taken seemingly by surprise, did not move, and the little General came to a sliding stop. Still determined, he recovered his balance, and sped away in the other direction, with the same result. There was then a discussion as to whether this were a waltz or not. That question being settled by the musicians, who said it was a polka, both parties danced in the same direction, until they had made a couple of flying rounds, when they stopped, and the General offered his partner to me. It was somewhat reminiscent of putting out the ash-barrels on Monday morning, but the lady was willing, and for the next three hours Eustace and I and the General took turns whirling her over the adobe floor.

“A little excitement like that,” said the General, as we finally took our departure, “breaks the monotony of life.”

IV

As I came to know the Mexicans better, I discovered that such an evening, although it impressed a Gringo as a trifle boresome, was quite an event in middle-class Mexican existence.

The Latin-American had an amazing knack of not being bored. This, too, was a product of his mental habit of living wholly in the present. He never suffered from the Anglo-Saxon sense of a waste of time; he was never afflicted with reflections about countless other ways of spending his evening.

He could sit every night in the same *plaza*, looking at the same faces. He could meet the same friends day after day, and be just as pleased to see them, and ask them the same questions about their many relatives, and part with the same elaborate courtesies. He could listen hour after hour with the same enjoyment to the same pieces of music that the village band had played for the past ten years. And he could talk with the same neighbors about exactly the same things again and again, and never lose his enthusiasm either as speaker or listener.

After supper, at the hotels along the way, proprietor and guests would bring their chairs to the sidewalk, where they could see the passers-by, and would remain there for hours, chatting with tremendous zest about nothing at all. Inconsequential remarks, which Americans of equal intelligence might consider unworthy either of utterance or audience, would be offered for popular consideration with emphatic statement, and received almost with applause. I recall the declaration of a young *señorita* to the effect that she considered a bath very refreshing. This bit of wisdom, which elsewhere in

the world might have been accepted as trite and obvious, brought every member of the circle into enthusiastic agreement. It was quite as though she had advanced a startling new theory, which had long been hovering vaguely in the minds of the others, but which they now heard propounded for the first time. It stimulated cries of "Yes, indeed!" or "You have spoken most truly!" and the discussion lasted for half an hour.

With Mexican kindness, they always included me in the conversation, although I spoke their language abominably. Had a foreigner murdered English as I murdered Spanish, I should not have had the patience to listen to him. Yet they listened avidly, knitting their brows sometimes in their effort to guess the meaning. If they smiled, their smiles were kindly. They were pleased that the foreigner should try to learn their language. If they disliked Americans in general, they were quickly ready to like any individual American who would meet them halfway. And the moment he showed a willingness to adopt their own elaborate courtesy, they described him as *muy simpatico*—an expression that means infinitely more than our nearest equivalent of "very sympathetic"—and hailed him as "*paisano*"—"fellow-countryman." And they would promise him anything.

v

If at first impression, the elaborate Spanish politeness seems boresome, it gradually seeps its way into the soul of the average visitor so insidiously that within two weeks he finds himself resenting the rudeness of Americans more recently arrived than himself.

I met one on the train that took me out of Guaymas.

He was trying to tell the conductor that this passenger coach would have been condemned long ago in the good old U.S.A. Since the official did not understand English, even when shouted, the newcomer was growing a trifle peeved. He turned disgustedly to Eustace and myself:

“Damn these spigs, anyway! How do they expect anybody to come down here and do business with them when they can’t talk like other people?”

He seemed out of place in Mexico. He belonged essentially to the smoking compartment of an American Pullman, where his counterpart can invariably be found with thumbs beneath suspender straps, telling the world about the big deals which his type seems always to have “just pulled off between trains in Detroit.”

In Mexico, he admitted failure. He was selling soap—“the best grade of pure white bath soap on the market.” But buyers were too ignorant to con-

verse with him in *his* language, and they showed a ridiculous inclination to purchase the brilliant scarlet soaps turned out by a German firm that catered to the native love of bright color.

“If I’d known what they were like,” he said, speaking loudly, “I’d have laid in a side-line of perfume and bug powder.”

We suggested that some of the passengers *might* understand English.

“What the hell do I care? Let ’em hear it. It’ll do ’em good. Let the dirty greasers know what we Americans think of ’em! Say, I’m glad I met you fellows. I’ve been lonesome for somebody from God’s country.”

He attached himself to us, and stuck like a leech. At Culiacán, where we stopped over for a day, he made the discovery that “whiskey” was the same in Spanish as in English. After imbibing freely in a little saloon kept by an elderly lady whose manners were those of royalty, he propped his feet on the table and expectorated with impressive accuracy at a picture of the Madonna that hung on the wall.

We dragged him out, and led him toward the hotel.

“What do I care about her?” he growled. “Damned spig! Let ’er *call* a policeman. I’ll lick ten Mexican policemen!”

At the hotel, after we had persuaded him not to hit the General, he favored our friend with another dis-

course on the relative prowess of Americans and "Greasers."

"Any time we get good and ready, we'll come down here and take this rotten republic and make a decent place out of it! We'll clean up your spig army in two weeks! All you guys can do is knife people in the back! When you have a war, you point your rifles around the corner of a building and pull the trigger without lookin' where you shoot! Any good Yank can lick ten of you—ten of you—with one arm tied behind his back!"

The General's face darkened. I watched him, rather hoping that the slender little Mexican would proceed to mop up the floor with the valiant soap-salesman. Beneath his politeness, I knew, there was a sensitive, proud nature quick to resent an insult. Yet so ingrained were his traditions of courtesy that—even while a tigerish gleam in his eyes betrayed his wrath—he merely smiled.

"The *señor*," he said, "is feeling very lively tonight."

VI

As he walked away, we feared that he had no further use for gringos, but on the following morning, as we sat in the *plaza*, the General came up to embrace us with more than his usual ardor. He was feeling "very lively" himself. He announced that

he had been up all night, and that he was now ready to wander over to the shady side of town to call upon a few of the "girls."

When we suggested that it was too early in the day, and advocated rest rather than recreation, he was agreeable, as always. He was even tractable. He would allow us to lead him back to the hotel; at the door he would embrace us again, promising to go straight to bed; fifteen minutes later he would come strolling up to us in the *plaza*, falling upon our necks as though it were our first meeting, and repeating his suggestion about calling upon the girls.

"How about your fiancée in Mazatlán?" Eustace inquired.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"But she is in Mazatlán! And I am in Culiacán!"

"Don't you love her?"

"Love her! Ah, *señor*, who would not love her! So good, so pure, so true, so beautiful, so like an angel in Heaven! For two whole years I have dreamed of her! Throughout the two years that I was *Villista* in Chihuahua!

"Listen, *señor*. Two years ago I left Mazatlán. She promised that she would marry me. But I was penniless, *señor*. And in Mexico, the man must buy his bride's trousseau. I was mechanic, and I went to Sonora to work in the mines. I was in the village of San Pedro when the *Villistas* came through. Some

youths from the town fired upon the rear-guard, killing Villa's cousin. And Villa ordered that every man in San Pedro should die in punishment. They herded me with the others in the public square, and took us out, twenty at a time, to the church wall, where our youths were slaughtered with pistol and machine gun. But they spared me, for I was mechanic, and Villa had use for mechanic.

“Of course, I became *Villista*. Who, *señor*, would not? And I fought Carranza with the others. Why not? Who was Carranza but a general more fortunate than Villa, who captured Mexico City, and made himself president? I fought with Villa all through Chihuahua. Yes, I helped to fire upon Columbus, in your own New Mexico, but I liked Americans, and I fired in the air. I would have come home, but I had no money for the journey. There came a day when we took Juarez. I was lieutenant then. I captured a building with my men. It was gambling house. There was gold upon the tables, and I filled my pockets. Why not, *señor*? Some one else would have taken it. I ran away from the *Villistas*. I rode four hundred miles—four hundred miles, *señor*—through the mountains and across the Yaqui desert.”

Unconsciously he struck a dramatic pose.

“Would I have done that, *señor*, if I did not love the girl?”

Then he climbed into a coach, and rode away to-

ward a questionable destination with a gay little wave of his hand.

VII

I was inclined to doubt the General's story.

He was manifestly a poseur. He possessed, among other qualities, an inordinate desire to attract attention. He knew, for instance, that he was handsome, and would spend hours combing his dark hair, or powdering his face. He loved to be stared at by the young girls in the *plaza*. He basked in admiration and reveled in adulation or flattery.

His vanity manifested itself also in a desire to be photographed. If I wished to snap a landscape or a street scene, Eustace had almost to hold him, lest he arrange himself artistically in the immediate foreground. Upon his return from the red light district that morning, he announced that he had promised its inmates to bring us there with our camera for a group picture.

He led us to the outskirts of town to a region where several slatternly brown females sat upon the curb in negligée, smoking cheap cigars, and introduced us in a speech which seemed more elaborate than such an informal occasion required. The ladies, surprised as Mexicans always are when some one keeps an agreement, begged that we wait while they beautified themselves, and we waited for over



IN THE DAYS OF CARRANZA ONE FREQUENTLY SAW A BANDIT
HANGING AROUND THE RAILWAY

an hour. They appeared eventually, in silk finery, with an eighth of an inch of powder laid upon a facial coating of glycerine.

Then ensued the difficulties that confront every photographer in Latin America. They protested against venturing into the sunlight. Sunlight would ruin the complexion! When, in response to explanations, they did step out from the shade, they kept raising their hands to shelter their faces. And finally, when we had them properly grouped with the General in the center, some one exclaimed that she must be holding her doll, and while she searched for the doll, the group broke up and scurried out of the sunlight.

At length, the picture being taken, they all clamored to see it at once. To my statement that it had to be developed by a photographer, they listened with suspicion. Their familiarity with the itinerant tin-type man had bred a distrust of my slow methods. Yet they, with the politeness that extends in Latin America even to the underworld, did not voice the suspicion. And when, in the afternoon, we returned with what we considered an excellent picture, they rushed excitedly to view it.

There was a disappointed silence. They did not intend to be rude, but their grief escaped them.

“I’m not smiling!”

“My face came out dark!”

My camera, being a *Gringo* camera, had insulted

them by its blunt frankness. But they tried to conceal their disappointment. They thanked us profusely. And they carried away the film, to destroy it as soon as our backs were turned.

“You were very foolish,” said the General afterwards. “You did not have to take a real picture. You should have pointed the camera and clicked something else. It would have pleased them.”

VIII

Strangely enough, the more hypocrisy one discovered in the little General, the more one liked him.

It was a hypocrisy leavened by kindness and humor. And to him, as to other Latin-Americans, it was not hypocrisy at all, for his was a code of life wherein our Anglo-Saxon standards were completely inverted.

Each race has developed its own ideas as to what is important in human conduct. The Anglo-Saxon, being by nature blunt and frank, regards truth as a supreme virtue. When he discovers something wrong, he sets about correcting it. The Latin-American, being by nature suave and courteous, regards truth as an irritating and offensive bad habit. When he discovers something wrong, he politely ignores it.

From our viewpoint, the Latin-American appears shallow and superficial. He lives a life of pretense,

completely satisfied so long as outward effect is properly maintained. He lies cheerfully and gracefully as a matter of good form. He offers one short change with a knightly gesture. If reminded gently that he has made an "error" in his count, he is extremely grateful for the correction. If informed that he has cheated, he becomes highly indignant that his honor has been so rudely questioned. He wears handsome clothes and shabby underwear. He usually lets the tailor wait indefinitely for payment, and when pressed to settle a bill, he says with impressive dignity, "Because you insult me in your implication that I am not to be trusted, I shall not pay you for another month!"

He is inordinately fond of parading himself in public. He deliberately caters to theatrical taste. He is by nature no more impulsive than an Anglo-Saxon, but upon the right occasion, since it attracts attention and distinguishes him as a temperamental creature, he indulges in great emotion. He makes a wild demonstration of enthusiasm over friends. He affects much grief over the death of his mother-in-law. He grows furious at times, but usually in the absence of the enemy, in the presence of an enemy whom he believes he can lick, or under the influence of alcohol. He is courageous enough—frequently to a point of recklessness which the Anglo-Saxon seldom equals—but usually when he believes the object worth the risk, or when vanity overcomes his

judgment, to lure him into a dramatic scene before an admiring audience.

He understands the shallow pretenses of his fellows, but he accepts them as real, just as they accept his. He professes unlimited faith and confidence in their loyalty and integrity, although he suspects that they can be trusted only so long as it is to their advantage. He knows them to be—like himself—in-dolent, undependable, and potentially dishonest, yet he makes eloquent speeches to them, extolling their energy, reliability, and general uprightness. By a process of self-hypnotism, he convinces himself momentarily that he means these lavish professions. When they respond with similar praises of his own worth, he glows all over with a very much gratified self-satisfaction.

Generalizations of this sort, I admit, are always unjust. Out of the mass of the Latin-American population stand many splendid individuals to whom this character analysis does not apply. Even in the mass, the various characteristics are subject to variation from country to country. But on the whole, from an Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, these people appear idealists in speech and materialists in action. One hand counts the rosary while the other scratches fleas. Judged by the Anglo-Saxon, they have few real virtues. Yet one must remember that each race has its own standards, created out of an unconscious desire to glorify itself by worshipping

as virtues the qualities which it happens to possess. Judged by their own standards, their vices are virtues, and our virtues are vices.

It is the Latin-American's many faults that make him likeable. His own defects, which he understands but refuses to admit, have made him extremely tolerant toward the defects of others. Being supersensitive, he is considerate of a stranger's feelings. Loving flattery, he is lavish in its bestowal. Being vain, he is eager to make a good impression, and frequently proves generous and hospitable. Being indolent, he has infinite leisure for entertainment. At all times he is friendly, agreeable, and courteous.

To-day, several years after my first visit to Mexico, when I have lived among the natives of twenty-six different lands, and met travelers from many others, there is no people whose company I have enjoyed more than that of the Latin Americans. And no one individual who proved a more pleasant companion than the little Mexican General.

IX

He was still with us when Eustace and I set out upon the last stage of our railway journey to Mazatlán.

So, incidentally, was the soap-salesman.

The train brought us to the end of the long stretch

of desert that extended from Sonora far down into Sinaloa. An occasional palm tree rose among the cactus. Adobe huts gave way to structures of cane and thatch. A delicious balminess in the air heralded the approach of the tropics. A tang of salt came from the Pacific breezes, and the sea itself loomed presently before us, a glorious blue beneath a cloudless sky.

The little General leaned from the window, his eyes shining.

“Home! Home at last, *señores!*”

Then the eyes darkened, with a somber melancholy that came at times into their depths. I suspected, as often I had suspected, that he was playing his dramatic rôle to gain our sympathy.

“You are worrying about the authorities?” I asked.

But he spoke without effort at effect:

“There is danger. I have informed them of my coming. But I can prove that Villa took me prisoner—that I could not help myself.”

“The girl will be waiting for you, of course?”

“I have not informed *her*. It will be a surprise! Such a surprise, *señores!*”

He did not know that she had already married a rival. He never did know. Somewhere at the edge of the desert, the train stopped, and a party of federal soldiers came aboard. A *Carranzista* officer

walked quickly up the aisle, scanning the faces of the passengers. Before the little General, he paused.

“Ramón Vásquez?”

“Sí, señor.”

“Come with me.”

The General rose. He was strangely calm. He seemed suddenly to have gained in stature. There was a quiet pride in his bearing—a poise—a distinction. He shook hands with each of us, even with the American who had insulted him.

“There is an army post here, *señores*. I had hoped to go home to-night to see the girl. But it is better, perhaps, that the investigation come first. Remember, *señores*, in Mazatlán *my* house is *your* house.”

X

There was no investigation.

The soldiers cast a noose about his neck, and threw the other end over the limb of a tree. A horseman made it fast to his saddle. For the moment, so unbelievable was the proceeding, I was stunned. Then, my heart pounding as though the noose were about my own neck, I hurried with Eustace to the scene, protesting.

The General smiled at us.

“You are good friends,” he said. “I am grateful.

But you can not help me, and you may invite trouble for yourselves. If in Mazatlán you should meet the *Señorita*”—and he whispered her name reverently —“please to tell her that I would have come. Good-by, my friends.”

He glanced toward the car window, where the other American stared with blanched face. And he laughed. Then, with characteristic vanity, he stroked back the hair from his forehead.

“If any one shoots,” he said, “please not to shoot at the face.”

The horseman dug his spurs into the beast, and the rope tightened. The tree was not high enough. The little General reached earthward with his toes, barely touching the ground with them, balancing there in an instinctive effort to preserve life, even for a moment. The officer gave an order. The men unslung their rifles, and fired a scattering volley.

XI

As the smoke cleared away, the train crawled slowly onward toward Mazatlán. For a long time, no one spoke. When Eustace finally broke the silence, it was in a futile effort to turn our minds to another subject.

“We’ll get there just in time to catch the boat south.”

The soap-salesman came out of his reverie with a start.

“I don’t know as I’ll go south. I think I’ll catch a boat north to Frisco. You can’t do business with these spi—with these Mexicans.”

CHAPTER VI

THOSE DARK-EYED SEÑORITAS!

I

IT was evening when the train brought Eustace and myself into Mazatlán. Since the fortnightly steamer was scheduled to sail for the south at eight o'clock, we leaped into a cab, and ordered the *cochero* to drive like fury.

He whipped up his slumbering nags, and we rattled toward the wharf, through conventional narrow streets lined with the traditional fortress-like houses of Latin-America. But—although it may have been the effect of the tropical climate—it seemed that each balcony or window was occupied by a *señorita* infinitely more attractive than any that had occupied the same sort of balcony or window in the same sort of dwellings in any of the previous cities.

“Whoa!” called Eustace. “In the interests of journalism, let’s have a longer look at this town!”

But before the interests of journalism were fully satisfied, the steamer whistled from the harbor, and our *cochero* whipped up his horses again. On we rattled until we came to the *plaza*. It was an unusu-

ally attractive *plaza*. There were royal poincianas, tinkling fountains, and—

“Whoa!” called Eustace. “In the int—”

The *plaza* also appeared to be inhabited by what evidently was the most abundant product of Mazatlán. But the steamer whistled again, and the whip crackled, and we careened wildly around sharp corners to the harbor. It was a delightful harbor. A semi-circle of driveway bordered it—a driveway lined with graceful cocoa-palms that whispered softly in the gentle breeze. A newly risen moon peeped through their fronds, and sparkled along the wide expanse of sea, tipping each wave with a streak of silver as the swells rolled in from the Pacific to shatter themselves in gleaming spray against the rocks before us. From the thatched cottages of the fisherfolk across the bay there drifted to us the tinkle of a guitar. And from the city behind us sounded the chimes of a cathedral clock. It was striking eight—the hour our steamer was to sail.

“Hurrah!” we shouted. “We’ve missed it!”

II

We had just acquired the mental attitude requisite to appreciation of Mexico—a state of unworried and unhurried tranquillity such as enables the Mexican himself to sit all day on a *plaza* bench, enjoying the balmy southern breezes, smoking innumer-

able cigarettes, discussing nothing in particular, watching the other idlers, and admiring the beauties—both animate and inanimate—of the whole pleasant scene.

Mazatlán had been designed for people with such a mental attitude. The climate was balmy. The whole city was quaintly Mexican. There was not a tourist-sight in town. There was, in short, nothing to do except to sit in the *plaza*—such a *plaza* as might be found in any other Mexican city, a little square park with a music kiosk in the center, surrounded by palms and ferns and shaded walks, and with an aged white cathedral for its background. Sitting there, one saw the entire population pass in review, for as elsewhere in Mexico, the *plaza* was at once a club, a meeting place, a music-hall, a playground, and even a marriage market.

III

On my first morning, fortunately a Sunday morning, while I still retained a slight vestige of Anglo-Saxon energy, I was there at daybreak, determined to observe minutely what transpired.

At 6.30, the only other occupants of the benches were several ragged beggars.

At 7.00, the Mazatlán Street Cleaning Department, both members barefoot, appeared upon the scene, dragging a long hose, whereupon the beggars

cautiously adjourned to the steps of the municipal building.

At 7.29, the first bootblack stopped to point accusingly at my shoes. No sooner had he polished them than a dozen other bootblacks stopped to point at them, evidently presuming that shoe-polish acted like alcohol, and that I would now suffer from an insatiable craving for more.

At 7.30, I discovered that wiggling a finger—the Latin-American gesture for “No!”—required less energy than shaking the head.

At 7.47, the first excitement! A policeman’s whistle screamed an alarm! The policeman was chasing a small and very ragged urchin diagonally across the park. The urchin appeared to be gaining, but just as they reached the corner, out popped another policeman, also tooting his whistle, and both pursued the youth up the north side of the square, until joined by a third officer, similarly shrilling the alarm. They disappeared around the cathedral, and the *plaza* idlers settled back into their seats. Popular sentiment seemed to be with the urchin.

At 7.48, a party of dogs invaded the *plaza* fountain to enjoy a bath.

At 7.49, a party of *peons* drove the dogs out of the fountain to enjoy a drink.

At 7.50, the ragged urchin reappeared, having doubled around the cathedral. There were now six

cops in pursuit, still tooting their whistles. Pursued and pursuers ran diagonally back across the *plaza*. At the southeast corner, a seventh policeman dived out from behind a rubbish can, and effected the capture. All marched away with a dignity that emphasized the majesty of the law. The *plaza* idlers settled back again. No one inquired the wherefore of the chase. All seemed sufficiently pleased that there had been such diversion.

At 8.00, the cathedral bells rang, not solemnly as though in invitation to mass, but rapidly and aggressively, commanding attendance.

At 8.01, two middle-aged male *peons* entered the church. They wore their shirts outside the pants, in Indian fashion, and were unconcernedly holding hands, like a pair of children.

At 8.35, more excitement! Policemen's whistles were tooting again. This time a pig had invaded the *plaza*. Evidently pigs were not allowed there except when muzzled and on leash. Six policemen, assisted by a full corps of bootblacks, chased the snorting little porker around palm trees and through the flower beds.

At 8.37, the policemen formed an escort, and marched away again, still with dignity and majesty, escorting the latest captive to the police barracks.

At 9.00, the cathedral bell resumed its unhallowed racket.

At 9.08, Carmen Rosa María de la Concepción

Purísima Rodríguez, who lived upstairs opposite the *plaza*, commenced her piano lesson, playing those rippling little Spanish melodies, with occasional pauses while she searched for the bass note.

At 9.09, I decided to stroll to the other side of the park.

At 9.10, I found Eustace sitting on a bench with a distinguished-looking middle-aged American who, I hoped, would gratify my ideas of romance by proving an absconded bank cashier. But he was introduced as a mining man by the name of Werner. He was eating oranges and tossing the peels into the shrubbery, meanwhile bowing to the celebrities who passed. "Here comes General *Cómo-se-Llama*, the worst cut-throat in Mexico. Hello, General, *muy buenas días*, how are you?"

At 9.11, a second general passed, in a uniform which he had designed himself—sky blue cap, bright red coat, and green trousers, all embellished with gold braid. He was five feet high, and four feet wide. "They use him for dress parade," said Werner.

At 9.12, a third general passed, marching through the street, followed by eight soldiers.

At 9.49, the first pretty *señoritas*, on their way to mass with a forbidding-looking mother, stopped to rest on the bench opposite. The girls wore the latest Parisian modes, but mother still clung to the old-fashioned *rebozo*, or shawl. Each wore a little

black lace *mantilla* pinned to the hair. One girl noted that we were looking at her, and her eyes twinkled appreciatively. She whispered to the other girl, and both smiled.

At 9.51, after an accusing glance from mother, we decided to stroll around the *plaza*. "They'll consider it an insult," said Werner. "They expect you to stay here and talk together about how lovely they are, just loud enough for them to hear it."

At 10.26, the musicians gathered for their Sunday morning concert. Having tuned up, they continued to blow and toot, indulging the Mexicans' love of noise. Half of them were unshod; all were brown; none looked like accomplished artists. I dreaded the racket they'd make when all tooted at once.

At 10.30, they played the most beautiful band music I had ever heard.

At 10.52, society emerged from the cathedral. Barefoot *peons* withdrew from the *plaza* to make room for the aristocrats.

At 11.00, the beggars became active. The blind men closed their eyes, and the cripples started to flop. They wriggled from bench to bench; they suffered themselves to be led by little children; they crawled in snake-like twists and propelled themselves in frog-like jumps; they hobbled upon crutches; they stumped upon legless knees; they turned over on their backs and squirmed upside down. At each bench, they would whine in plaintive

voice, "A little penny, for the sake of God, *señores!*" The Mexicans liked this. They regarded beggars as an institution that enabled them to gratify personal vanity by giving alms. It did not cost much. And they regarded curse or blessing with superstitious respect. So the procession hopped and flopped and squirmed and for-god-saked unmolested all around the park.

At 11.10, the Promenade was in full swing. The elders kept a watchful eye on their daughters from the benches. The youths draped themselves gracefully on their canes along the outer walk. The girls, in merry groups of twos and threes and fours, arm in arm, swung past on exhibition—dainty little creatures, fairly radiating sweetness and modesty, yet keenly aware of the masculine admiration they aroused, quick to notice if a youth's gaze lingered, ready to exchange opinions in whispered conference, ready even to respond with a brief flash of eyes, supremely self-assured, yet never bold. From childhood they had paraded this *plaza*, accustoming themselves to the sensation of being on exhibition. They liked to be looked at. It brought a flush to their cheeks, and a luster to their dark eyes. This was their only opportunity, in an existence of semi-seclusion, to see and to be seen. There were stolid-looking maids in the procession, carrying babies all done up in silks and laces. There were little girls of ten and twelve, already practicing coquetry. And

there were innumerable maidens of fifteen and twenty, suitable for marriage, and watching the circle of young men for an indication that to-day's parade had awakened the divine fire.

At 11.20, the first youth fell. He detached himself from the onlookers and—accompanied by a companion who carefully showed his neutrality by a super-nonchalance of manner—followed one of the damsels around and around the square, affecting a melting expression of countenance, and beseeching her with melancholy eyes for a backward glance. The girl's companions nudged her and giggled; the girl herself pretended to be unaware that she was followed; but the flush heightened in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled.

At 11.59, the families reassembled, and moved homeward, each a parade by itself. The enamored youth gazed in the proper affectation of despair after his departing maiden, and gave an imitation of a candle that has been extinguished.

At 12.00, Werner announced that the bench-slats had stamped him with an accordion-pleated design, and left us.

At 12.01, two surviving *señoritas*—the two of the 9.49 episode—stopped at our bench, and seated themselves coyly at the far end.

At 12.02, a boy sold us three bags of peanuts for a nickel.

At 12.04, not knowing what to do with the third bag of peanuts, I offered it to the *señoritas*, and was rewarded with a "*Gracias*" which could not have been sweeter had the offering been a five-pound upholstered box of the most expensive chocolates.

At 12.05, the observations inscribed in my now-faded note-book during those first vestiges of Anglo-Saxon energy, appear for some reason to have ceased.

IV

As I recall that first conversation with Herminia and Lolita, it ran somewhat as follows:

Were we from the United States? *Ay*, what a wonderful country must be the United States! How they would love to go to a land where women enjoyed such freedom! And American men respected women more than did the Mexicans. But how long were we remaining in Mazatlán? So short a time! Why did we not stay longer? Did we not think Mexican girls as attractive as American girls? *Ay*, but we were very polite to say such nice things! Still, did we not have wives at home? Not even sweethearts? No? Then why should one be in such haste to leave Mazatlán? *Ay, Dios!* The cathedral clock was striking twelve and a half, and their family would scold them for lingering so long! But they

came to the *plaza* every evening at eight. Yes, always at eight. *Adios!* And again *muchas gracias* for the peanuts!

v

The *plaza* became a very definite habit to Eustace and myself. At home, we could never have loitered day after day in a park, doing nothing, but in Mexico one could. The other idlers were always interesting. Some amusing little incident was always happening. Yet nothing ever seemed to disturb the prevailing restful calm.

Herminia and Lolita were always there at eight.

They were slender little girls, with the delicately molded features and the immense dark eyes characteristic of their race. They were adept, too, in the use of those eyes—as all Spanish girls are adept—yet if, to a casual observer they appeared flirtatious, they proved upon further acquaintance—as all Spanish girls prove—to be quite the most shy, and modest, and altogether circumspect little misses to be found anywhere in the world.

For some inexplicable reason, the Spanish *señorita* has been most inaccurately portrayed in our fiction and drama as a wild vampire, modeled after the operatic Carmen, until the average American pictures her as a fiery adventuress who lifts one shoulder higher than the other and curls her sensuous lips



THE MEXICAN SEÑORITA HAS ALWAYS BEEN PORTRAYED IN
OUR FICTION AS A WILD VAMPIRE

into a sinister smile destined to wreck the life of every passing bullfighter.

In real life, the Mexican maiden—and one might include her sisters of Spanish ancestry—is, with all her mischievous smiling—the most timid, sedate and well-behaved little miss that can be found anywhere. She lives at home in semi-seclusion. She never appears in public without a chaperon, except possibly to stroll with another maiden to the shops or the *plaza*. She is at all times guarded against the machinations of wicked males—who are always assumed to be predatory animals until they indicate very definitely that they intend marriage, and who are by no means to be trusted even then—and she never meets a man except where others are present or when the window bars afford insulation for her virtue.

In the more cosmopolitan centers, where the daughters of the wealthier families have been educated abroad, and where parents have adopted a foreign viewpoint, this close guardianship is often relaxed. But in the smaller city, like Mazatlán, the *señorita* is still the victim of a social system carefully designed to protect her against a race of men whose mind dwells almost exclusively on sex.

The Mexican—even more than most of his brothers of Spanish ancestry—while he publicly extols women as the most exquisite handiwork of God, privately regards them as instruments exclusively for

the gratification of natural instincts. Although he may talk eloquently of love, he is incapable of any infatuation which is not based primarily upon sex appeal. But, since he is a jealous creature, and since he knows that his brothers, like himself, would take advantage of any opportunity for seduction, he demands that his wife be a model of unquestionable propriety.

And the Mexican maiden, brought up to believe that her only aim in life is to attract a husband, smiles quite alluringly, and leads conversation to sentimental themes, yet remains most circumspect. In her smile there is a promise, but her family will see that the promise is not fulfilled until marriage.

Even in love there is nothing genuinely impulsive about the Latin of either sex. He, originally, is motivated by the desire to possess something more attractive and exclusive than the females which can easily be found in Latin America, either in officially segregated districts or among the servant classes. She, originally, is motivated by a desire for home and children—a desire not unknown among the women of other countries, but far keener in lands where, despite the inroads of foreign custom, there is still but little amusement for women except the care of babies.

Romance, in the beginning, is as carefully studied by the Latin as is his politeness and his every other quality. Once begun, since he is an adept at self-

hypnotism, it may become a thing of tremendous emotion. Yet the courtship at all times follows an extremely formal course. The youth, charmed by a maiden's smile (and having made inquiries about her family), follows her home from the *plaza* night after night, and leans against the opposite wall to stare at her window until she, finally captivated by his persistence (and having made inquiries about his family), allows him to coo at her through the bars. At length he makes a formal call, announces his intentions, and is duly accepted by her parents, who thereafter welcome him to the parlor, but seldom allow him alone with the daughter.

It is the ideal system for these people. It may seem absurd to a *Gringo*, yet it is quite satisfactory to the Spanish-American. The barriers that surround the girl prove to him that others have not been able to reach her. If they prevent him from learning her disposition, it does not particularly matter. He knows that she has been brought up with the idea of becoming an obedient wife. He does not expect intellectual stimulation from her companionship. He can see that she is beautiful and desirable. And if there has been an element of premeditation in the beginning of his courtship, his mental habit of dwelling almost exclusively upon sex will soon arouse a keen desire which the tantalizing window-bars merely aggravate.

Yet after marriage, children usually bring some-

thing akin to a higher love. The man may not remain faithful, but he will provide for his wife, and honor her, and accord her every respect. She, having accomplished her chief aim in life, will forget herself in her devotion to husband and offspring. She will grow fat and sloppy, and spend most of her time preparing daughters for *their* chief aim. But at all times, unlike the Carmen of fiction, she will be modest and reserved, and faithful to a degree seldom found elsewhere in the world.

If Herminia and Lolita gave us a longer flash of eyes than was customary, at eight o'clock in the *plaza*, they were not adopting Carmen's tactics. They were merely two of many girls in a small city which, like most small cities, was equipped with comparatively few men to smile at.

VI

At that time, Eustace and I knew very little about Spanish custom.

We looked upon our mild flirtation as a pleasant and instructive way of spending the evening while waiting for another boat.

Herminia and Lolita would pass us two or three times, always with that promising flash of eyes, and a murmured "*Adios.*" Presently they would stop at a bench beyond, and glance back. Thereupon we would rise, stroll around the park as we had seen

Mexican youths do, and stop casually, as though by accident, at the girls' bench.

And conversation, as I recall it, invariably ran somewhat as follows:

Ay, but one was surprised that to-night we came to *their* bench! After the way we had stared at Carmen Rosa María de la Concepción Purísima Rodríguez, one expected that we might have gone to *her* bench. *Ay*, but both of them had seen! And Carmen Rosa María was the most beautiful girl in Mazatlán, no? No? Then who was? *Ay, gracias, gracias, señores!* So nice it was that we should say so! Did we really think so? *Ay*, but we were *simpatico—muy simpatico*—to say it!

Then commenced the Spanish lesson. It seemed, at times, a trifle impractical, for it was usually limited to phrases conveying admiration of feminine charm. If the male Latin-American revels in flattery, the female lives upon it, and these two *señoritas* were merely typical of most of their sisters in Mexico. A young man in their country was expected to spend the entire evening raving about their beauty. It mattered not how elaborate were his phraseology; he could expand his theme to a degree which would have brought any American flapper to her feet with the disgusted exclamation of, "How do you get that way? Do you think I'm a dumb-bell?", yet here it was not only accepted, but demanded. This, as any traveling Gringo soon discovers in

Mexico, was the theme most interesting to a *señorita*.

I suspected, at times, that I lacked the true grace of the Spanish cavalier. Since my command of the language was still somewhat limited, it was necessary to repeat the same phrases with tiresome regularity. I became aware of a foreboding, as we sat there beneath the coco-palms, that if I recited those phrases once more, all the cocoanuts would drop on me.

But when I suggested, as a change of entertainment, that we stroll over to a little café on the harbor-front for ice cream, the *señoritas* were quite shocked.

Ay, but one was now in Mexico! It was not custom! People would talk! And was it true that in the United States the girls—nice girls—could do such things? One had heard so, but it sounded incredible. One had even heard that young people went away, without chaperones, to theaters or dances. And was this true? One had actually heard that there were petting parties. How delightfully wicked! *Ay*, what a wonderful place must be the United States!

There was a pleasing simplicity about these little convent-sheltered maidens. If they craved flattery until it seemed a bit monotonous, one could at least pay it with veracity. And the *plaza*, although it was overpopulated with observers, was always pleasant. One had the illusion, particularly in the eve-

ning, that it was a theater where one collaborated with the rest of the populace in enacting a polite comedy-drama. The palms and ferns hung lifeless in the tropic calm, and the red hibiscus resembled paper flowers. The old cathedral transformed itself into a back-drop. The strains of the band came to one as from an orchestra hidden off-stage. There was something unreal about the soft whispers and the rippling laughter of the other youths and maidens. And when, as the chimes announced the hour of ten, the *señoritas* betook themselves homeward with cheerful little calls of "*Adios* until to-morrow!", I waited expectantly for a curtain to descend.

One evening, after the girls had departed, Werner stopped at our bench.

"Just thought I'd warn you," he said. "I know you don't mean any harm. There's something about this place that makes one lonesome for feminine company. But down here, unless you show very definitely that you intend marriage, they take it for granted you're up to monkey business. So just go easy, or you'll have their family jumping on your necks."

We thanked him. It was timely advice. And when, on the following evening, the girls suggested that we meet the family, we agreed. It seemed advisable as an indication of the highly sanitary state of our consciences.

Theirs was the usual one-story dwelling of solid

masonry characteristic of the country. A faded and crumbling plaster front concealed a pleasing, albeit conventional interior. The living room was floored with cool tiling. The furnishings—except for a piano with yellowed keys, and a marble-topped table littered with forbidding pictures of stout female ancestors—consisted mainly of stiff-backed chairs formally arranged in a row along each wall; yet the conventional effect was relieved somewhat by numerous white lace doilies on the seats, or by potted palms which gave the room the semblance of a garden.

The family proved gracious, but not entertaining. Papa and mama assured us that the house was ours—as is customary when a stranger enters the Latin-American home. Then, one by one, they brought forward their relatives and presented them—a daughter or two, several sons, a few cousins, nephews or nieces, a flock of aunts, some assorted uncles or brothers-in-law with their respective families, and finally grandma. Having informed us in turn that they were our servants, they took seats until the walls were lined with them, and silence fell upon the gathering.

Papa opened the conversation with a pleasant inquiry regarding the object of our visit to Mazatlán. Ah, we were writers! An admiring nod ran around the circle, finally reaching grandma, where it stopped momentarily until Uncle Somebody trans-

mitted our answer through an ear-trumpet. Grandma seemed a trifle perplexed, as though she did not know just what writers might be, but she nodded politely. Thus the conversation proceeded, papa acting as spokesman for the entire party, until—after the ordeal had continued for an hour or more—a servant entered with glasses of vermouth, and our reception closed in a toast proposed by papa to the “very distinguished guests, who have honored our humble household to-night.”

Our necks seemed to be free from the likelihood of assault, for upon the following evening the girls announced that they had permission to stroll beyond the *plaza*, as far as the driveway that bordered the harbor.

“Never have our parents permitted it with our own countrymen,” they added. “Our people trust Americans more than themselves.”

To show our appreciation, we took the girls home each night, even though it involved another session at which the family lined up around the wall to nod while papa conducted another tedious conversation. Yet, if we were occasionally bored, our two weeks passed rapidly.

VII

Our steamer finally whistled from the harbor. We had already purchased our tickets, and were on our

way to bid the *señoritas* farewell, when Werner intercepted us, waving a newspaper.

“Congratulations, boys! You’ve picked out mighty nice girls!”

Papa, it seems, had announced our engagement without consulting us. It was in the daily journal of Mazatlán!

“Why, good Heavens! Look here, Werner, we haven’t said a word to them! We called at the house every night, and we walked along the *Olas Altas*, with the permission of the family, but—”

“Oh, you called at the house every night! That’s the worst thing you could have done, my boys! That’s considered an avowal down here—especially since the town’s full of marriageable daughters with scarcely any men in sight! And it’s taken for granted, of course, that all Americans are millionaires. So you’re engaged all right. Now, what are you going to do about it?”

“I can’t think of any suggestion,” said Eustace, “except that we run like the devil for that boat.”

Werner shook his head.

“That means the girls are ruined for life. When a man breaks the engagement, it’s assumed that he’s learned the girl wasn’t chaste, or that he’s succeeded himself and doesn’t want her any more. No one else would marry them after that. And it’s hell to be an old maid in Mexico.”

We were somewhat appalled. They were really

very lovely little girls. But a Gringo couldn't pay compliments night after night for the next fifty years. And one thought, too, of grandma and her ear trumpet, and a solemn circle of relatives, and a table littered with pictures of forbidding-visaged female ancestors.

"There's one way out," said Werner. "Say good-bye to them as though you were going on a short business trip. From Manzanillo wire me that you were shot by bandits. That'll clear the girls. Hurry now, or you'll miss another boat. And by the way, when you wire me that you're dead, don't sign your own names."

VIII

At 7.49 p.m., having recovered the last vestiges of my Anglo-Saxon energy, I drove with Eustace to the house, and bade the family farewell. The girls appeared a trifle distressed, but not so much as we felt they ought to be. The family knew intuitively that we were fleeing, but with true Mexican politeness they accepted our explanations as though they believed.

At 7.52, we leaped back into the cab and ordered the cocheró to drive like fury.

At 7.56, we passed the *plaza*, but paused not in the interests of journalism.

At 8.00, we sailed out of Mazatlán's attractive

harbor, where the moonlight sparkled along the wide expanse of sea, and the tinkle of a guitar came to us from the thatched cottages of the fisher-folk, as though it were an accompaniment to the chimes of the old cathedral clock that we knew so well. Eight o'clock! Herminia and Lolita would be strolling in the *plaza*, where the strains of the band, as though from an orchestra off-stage, blended with the ripple of the fountain, with the voices of youths and maidens and the whispering of the palm trees!

At 8.01, Eustace discovered three peanuts in his pocket, and we solemnly dumped them overboard.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE DAYS OF CARRANZA

I

THE steamer plowed southward through a dazzling blue sea to Manzanillo, the port of disembarkation for Mexico City.

Despite its commercial importance, this is one of the several places on the Pacific Coast where a traveler, upon leaving his ship, takes one hasty glance at the dirty black beach and the cluster of driftwood shacks, grasps his nose firmly between thumb and forefinger, and makes a dash for the daily train that will carry him somewhere else.

As soon as a boatman had rowed us ashore, Eustace and I hastened to the telegraph office, and dispatched our message to Werner: "Foster and Eustace slain by bandits." Then we ran for the train. But, although an excited crowd surrounded the station, there was no train in sight.

"There will be none to-day," explained the agent. "Zamorra stopped it just outside of town, wrecked it, and shot most of the passengers."

II

By sheer coincidence, our message to Werner had been seemingly confirmed. Following the news dispatch of this hold-up, which undoubtedly would reach Mazatlán, the notice of our murder would carry conviction. For the moment, we were delighted. Then the agent added:

“There may be no train for several weeks.”

And we found ourselves stranded in the filthiest hole in Mexico. Manzanillo's streets were of thick sand, inadequately paved in spots with refuse or garbage, over which hovered millions of flies, and about which a host of black buzzards were picking and quarreling. The whole town was perched upon a narrow landspit between the murky bay and a still murkier lagoon, and backed by low hills whose scraggly jungle-growth the tropic sun had burned to a crisp. A few buildings of wood or plaster rose to the majesty of a second story; the others were low and of ramshackle structure, their driftwood composition varied occasionally by patches of flattened tin that had once done service as Standard Oil cans. The roofs were mainly of thatch. Interior decoration, as glimpsed through doorless doorways, was limited to pages from the local equivalents of the *Police Gazette*. Over the whole unsightly place there hung an odor of rotted fish, emanating from neighboring lagoons which had evaporated throughout

the long dry season to nothing more than a crust of reddish scum.

The principal virtue of the leading hotel—a wobbly two-story edifice operated by a Chinaman—was that it possessed enough odors of its own to neutralize the fishy breezes from the lagoon. The food was nauseous and the water poisonous. The natives of the town quenched their thirst at the stagnant jungle pools by rolling up a leaf into the semblance of a funnel, poking it through the inch of scum that covered the water, and drinking the fluid beneath with ecstatic sucks. Cautious foreigners were forced to patronize the hotel bar, where the beer ascended in temperature from lukewarm in the morning to some degree near boiling point in mid-afternoon.

Determined to make the best of our indefinite residence, we looked about for amusement.

There was always the beach. Its sand was black, and the rollers assumed the shade of molasses. The women of the town, since Mexican women are too modest to wear short-skirted bathing suits, always took their bath in a clumsy white linen gown which reached to the ankles, but which, as soon as it was wet, became completely diaphanous. They were as dark, usually, as the beach, and the silhouette effect was highly educational.

When the sights of the waterfront had received due attention, we retired to the lagoons to hunt alli-

gators. In the larger pools, which had not completely evaporated, we could see the corrugated tails of the big caymans tracing a leisurely path across the surface, and occasionally by making our way silently along the brush-grown shore, we could surprise a greenish-gray monster asleep on the mud-flats. Our diminutive pistols seemed to have little effect on their tough hide; our shots brought only a splash as the quarry plunged into the lagoon; a few bubbles would rise, and a muddy discoloration of the water would indicate that the alligator was safely imbedded in the loamy bottom of the pool. We tried to lasso one of them, with a loop of rope on the end of a pole, but the monster vanished, as usual, carrying with him the stoutest cord to be purchased in Manzanillo.

From alligator-hunting we turned to a study of natural history in general. The town and its environs offered plenty of material. One could scarcely walk the streets without shooing buzzards out of the way. Sooty black in color, with ashen-gray neck curved to suggest hunched shoulders, they hopped about with rocketing step, pouncing with hoggish squeals upon rotted carrion, and squabbling among themselves over its possession. One was tempted always to try the pistols on *them*, but they were protected by law, for without their services in disposing of the mess which Latin-American servants are accustomed to toss from the kitchen window,

cities like Manzanillo would be altogether uninhabitable.

Of insects there was an infinite variety. We did not have to seek them; they sought us. One could not push through the jungle without being bitten by ants on the bushes. In the town itself, half the population seemed to find constant occupation in picking something out of the other half's hair. The *peon* women would form a small circle, back to back, and perform this friendly little operation with one-hundred-per cent. efficiency. In the hotel room the scratchy noise of cockroaches scrambling up and down the wall lulled us to sleep each night.

Eustace, not content with this material for study, took up snakes in a serious fashion. He had once earned his way through college by feeding the reptiles in a neighboring zoo, and had formed a strange affection for them. He maintained that they recognized him as a friend and refused to bite. In Manzanillo he discovered a family of young serpents—squirmy green fellows which we could not identify but which the natives regarded as extremely venomous—whereupon he brought a handful of them to our room, and dumped his other possessions out of his suit-case to make a home for them. Later, when I absent-mindedly opened the same suit-case in search of cigars, and fled precipitately, our Chinese proprietor was greatly incensed because for days afterward the snakes would appear at the most un-

expected moments in various parts of the establishment, to the terror of servants and guests.

It not only worried his regular boarders, he said, but ruined trade at the bar. After a drink of hot beer, when a patron saw these things writhing across the counter—well, just yesterday the mayor himself had overturned a whole tray of glasses, smashed two chairs in his haste to reach the open air, and had not returned since! And the mayor was one of his best customers!

III

The bandit attack upon the train had occurred so close to the city that the *Carranzista* garrison threw up temporary barricades on the approaches to town.

Instead of sallying forth to pursue the bandits, however, the soldiers contented themselves with a daily parade across the *plaza*, led by a wheezy band of four pieces, intended presumably to reassure the civilian population.

The local *commandante* had suddenly assumed an air of great importance. He was a tall man with broad but extremely thin shoulders, with a wasp-like waist, and with legs that tapered toward the ground until one marveled that he could maintain his equilibrium in a stiff breeze. As though to accentuate the top-heavy effect, he wore the largest-brimmed *sombrero* in Mexico, a pair of moustachios that curled in

several spiral twists, a flowing red necktie, six kilometers of cartridge belt, and a massive old rifle, while he clad his slender ankles in skin-tight Spanish trousers of a type seldom seen to-day except upon the stage.

Seeing him alone, one felt that the rank of general was too little for him. Seeing him with his twenty valiant soldiers, one felt that the grade of corporal was too much.

The first qualification for a federal soldier in Mexico appears to be that he shall not exceed four feet in height. He comes invariably from the very lowest rank of society, which in Mexico is extremely low. He represents the poorest—and frequently the worst—specimen of humanity in the republic. In the days of Carranza he was ununiformed, except in the capital, and usually barefoot. He was generally dirty and unshaven, and his principal occupation seemed to be that of lounging on street-corners, insulting passing servant maids.

No motive of patriotism had prompted his enlistment. In some cases he was a mere boy attracted by the privilege of carrying a rifle. In others, he was a *peon* drafted against his will. In others, he was some old devil who could earn a living in no other fashion. Having been issued his arms, he became a full-fledged soldier. No one drilled him. He was allowed to wear whatever clothes he already possessed, although a faded pair of overalls was

considered especially *de rigueur*. Sometimes he received a *peso* a day, sometimes nothing. When I was in Mazatlán, a federal paymaster newly arrived with a satchelful of gold for the local garrison was giving such an elaborate series of booze-parties to his friends, that one wondered how much the troops did receive.

Such discipline as the soldiers possessed was due solely to fear of their particular commander. Under a *strong* man they made pretty fair soldiers. Under a *weak* man they were quite apt temporarily to turn bandits themselves. Every train in Mexico in those days was accompanied by a guard of them, but they seldom offered resistance in case of a hold-up.

“Why should they?” said an Old-Timer in Manzanillo. “The bandits don’t attack unless they outnumber the guard. The soldiers haven’t much chance. If the bandits win, they make a lot of money. If the soldiers win, they get nothing. So they usually cut and run.”

“I suppose that’s what they did when Zamorra held up this train?”

“No. According to reports, they pitched in and helped Zamorra rob the passengers.”

Even though our *Commandante* marched across the *plaza* each day behind his wheezy band, Manzanillo was expecting an attack, and there was considerable speculation as to what part the garrison



PEDRO ZAMORRA HAD REMOVED A FEW TIES WHERE THE TRAIN CAME
AROUND A BEND



SO WORTHLESS WERE THE FEDERAL TROOPS THAT MANY AMERICANS
PROFESSED A PREFERENCE FOR BANDITS

would play. But the gunboat *Guererro*—one half of the Mexican navy—finally came down the coast from Guaymas, and landed a force of sailors. Under their escort a party of workmen marched out to the scene of the disaster, and we followed them.

It was a jolly little picture. Pedro Zamorra, the local *bandido*, had twisted the rails and removed a few ties at a point where the train came around a bend. All that remained of the cars was a mess of twisted iron and a pile of splintered boards. A thousand ashen-gray buzzards were picking and quarreling about the wreckage. A thousand more, sleek and content, roosted upon the surrounding hillsides. From the tangled débris the workmen extracted the few remaining bodies of the passengers—very nonchalantly and unconcernedly, as though this were an accustomed task—and heaped them into a gruesome pyramid. A few cans of oil—a match—a bonfire. The buzzards glared in silent indignation at this interruption of their holiday. And the workmen commenced the labor of reconstruction.

IV

This was a common enough spectacle in those days to the residents of Mexico.

For years the republic had been in the throes of civil war—ever since the downfall of the great Dictator, Porfirio Diaz.

Diaz had built up his country by encouraging the foreign capitalist and the foreign promoter. It had become one of the leading nations of the world. But Mexican pride had been wounded at the admission that foreigners were essential to Mexico's development and prosperity. Mexican jealousy had resented the fortunes which the foreigners were reaping. Mexico had risen to cast out Diaz, and no other man had proved capable of filling his place. Conditions had grown steadily worse, until a dozen revolutionary leaders were squabbling for the presidency, each of them ruling a portion of the republic and claiming to rule the whole.

In an effort to bring order out of chaos the American government—under Wilson and Bryan—had recognized Venustiano Carranza as "First Chief." With American arms and ammunition, which proved even more useful than the American moral support, Carranza took Mexico City and elected himself president. In the estimation of most Old-Timers in the country, the American government might much better have recognized Pancho Villa or any other bandit. For Carranza, of all the contenders for power, was the leading exponent of the doctrine, "Mexico for the Mexicans!" His first move was to promulgate a new constitution, in many ways a splendid document, but one that gave every right to the workman and none to the capitalist. The foreigner promptly withdrew. And Mexico, in the hands of

the Mexicans, enjoyed a complete economic collapse.

Without employment, the *peon* everywhere turned to banditry as the only profitable occupation. Rebel leaders continued to dominate many sections of the republic—Villa in Chihuahua, Pelaez in the Oil Fields, Felix Diaz in Vera Cruz, Meixuerio in Oaxaca, and others elsewhere. And even in the territory nominally under Carranza control, gentlemen like Pedro Zamorra were popping up from time to time to spread a few rails, remove a few ties, pitch a railway train over a cliff, and provide another holiday for the buzzards.

v

Each evening in Manzanillo, when the beer had lost its midday warmth, two or three Old-Timers, stranded like ourselves, would gather at the bar to discuss conditions.

The Old-Timer in Mexico is very much of a type.

He is usually a quiet, unassuming man, with grizzly gray hair, and friendly blue eyes. He came from somewhere in the West or Middle West, so long ago that he has forgotten just when. He owns a mine that has ceased operation pending the arrival of better times. He is easy-going and fatalistic, a trifle careless about dress, blunt in manner yet with a natural kindness, slow of movement from long

residence in the tropics, and very fond of talking about "these people," by which he means the Mexicans. During the last revolution they took all his money away from him, and smashed up his mine, but he still cherishes an affection for them. He is waiting hopefully for another Diaz to bring prosperity back to Mexico.

He is a trifle reticent at first about talking. He is surprised that the itinerant writer regards him as an interesting character. But he is secretly very much pleased. Gradually he commences a yarn. It suggests another, and that one suggests another, until they follow in rapid succession.

Quoth one:

"I always used to carry a gun. Nowadays I'm afraid to. It's getting too dangerous. You can't tell who's a bandit. Some one comes riding up to you, looking like any other *peon*, and just as he reaches you, his blanket slide~~s~~ off his shoulder and you're looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter. Like as not, too, he's got some pal covering you from the brush. If you're armed, they're likely to make it a sure thing by shooting you first and robbing you afterward. So, when I hit the interior nowadays, I just take a bottle of *tequila*. When I meet a bandit, I show him I haven't anything worth taking, and offer him a drink, and that ends it."

Quoth another, a mining man from Durango:

"You see, there's good bandits and bad bandits.

Lots of 'em are chaps as can't make a living no other way. And some's just kids that think it's smart, and do it because it's so easy. Take Trinidad, down below Rosario. Just a youngster, but he's got the police buffaloeed. Rides into town in broad daylight and covers the barber with a Colt while he gets shaved. Shoots up a dance-hall now and then, but don't do much real harm.

“Only trouble with Trini is that he likes women. He come down from the hills one day with five of his gang, going to Rosario for something or other, and on the way he seen a fifteen-year-old girl—daughter of some rancher. Says he to the father, ‘I’ll stop to-morrow and take her along home with me.’ Well, the father wasn’t thrilled at having Trini for a son-in-law, especially so informal-like, so he sent to town for protection, and got a couple of dozen soldiers. They was all asleep in the shade next afternoon, when Trini gallops up, swings the girl on his saddle—most of these country kids think it’s kind of romantic to be taken away like that—and off he goes with her. The soldiers chased him, of course, but he held them off in a mountain pass ’til dark, and got away with her.

“That’s the way things are these days. I’m still trying to run my mine up in Durango, and I’m paying taxes to Carranza for protection, but I have to pay four different bandits to leave me alone. Even then, I got to ship my ore unsmelted for a hundred

miles. If I sent out pure bullion, some other bandit would probably grab it."

Quoth a third:

"There's worse than Trini just north of here, up in Tepic. They were capturing people so often that a prominent banker up in Mazatlán was making a regular business of ransoming them. He went down one time with five thousand pesos to buy another fellow's liberty, and the bandits grabbed him, and held him until his friends sent down five thousand pesos more. So anybody who gets caught now is out of luck. Those fellows have a nasty habit of cutting off your finger each week, and sending it up, all nicely preserved in a bottle of alcohol so it can be recognized, with a little reminder that unless the cash comes pretty soon, they'll send the head."

VI

So worthless were the federal troops that many Americans whom I met during my trip professed a preference for bandits.

One, operating a mine in Hidalgo in a town that had never contained a Carranza garrison, had experienced no difficulty at all. Twice he had been visited by members of Pelaez's gang, and on both occasions the rebels had paid for whatever they took from the company's stores. When the governor of Hidalgo announced that he was sending troops to

guard the mine—for which courtesy the mining company was supposed to pay—the American protested that he needed no troops. The soldiers were sent, despite the protest. On the night of their arrival, the company stores were looted by “bandits.”

While I was in Manzanillo, thieves raided the ranch of Tom Johnson, an American living a few miles south of the port. Among other plunder, they took away five mules. A few days later a *Carranzista* lieutenant rode up to the ranch-house with the animals, announcing that he had recaptured them, and demanding a reward.

“Reward!” exclaimed Johnson. “Why, you’re being paid by your government to recapture stolen property. I won’t pay you a damned *centavo!*”

The lieutenant laughed.

“Very well, *señor.*”

And he rode away, taking the mules with him.

In recognizing Carranza, our State Department had merely created trouble for Americans living in the territory controlled by other leaders.

Several weeks later, in Vera Cruz, I was to meet Dr. Charles T. Sturgis and his wife, who had been held prisoners for many months by *Zapatistas* in Chiapas. Dr. Sturgis, a retired dentist, had lived a quiet life for years upon his farm in Southern Mexico, practicing his profession gratis among the *peons* of his neighborhood. One day a party of rebels kidnapped him and his wife, and brought him

to the bandit camp on the Rio de la Venta, where they set the Doctor to work on the bandits' teeth, while Mrs. Sturgis was assigned to labor with the native women. Mrs. Sturgis' mother, who also had been kidnapped, died after a few weeks. Neither the Doctor nor his wife were young, or robust, yet Cal y Mayor, the *Zapatista* chieftain, constantly added insult and injury to their toil and privation.

“Why do you go out of your way to hurt us?” Mrs. Sturgis asked him.

“Because your Gringo president has recognized my enemy!” he answered.

For months they remained prisoners. The chieftain used Mrs. Sturgis as a messenger to other bandits, on missions which he considered unsafe for his own men, always holding her husband as hostage for her return. At last, when illness had rendered the Doctor unfit for further work, they were released, with one horse for the two of them, and with only five *tortillas* as food for their journey of sixty miles through a tropical jungle. When, after six days, they reached their farm, they found that the Carranza government had declared them rebel sympathizers and had confiscated their property. Strange natives were gathering the crops they had sowed. Friends provided funds for their journey to Vera Cruz, where they were to embark for New Orleans. When I met the frail, gray-haired couple in the

Vera Cruz consulate, they were on the verge of nervous breakdown.

Yet compared with some Americans, they were fortunate. Many of the stories one picked up at that time were unprintable, particularly those of young girls who fell into bandit hands.

“We went up to Washington,” said one Old-Timer, “with actual photographs of two American women after the rebels were through with them. And those fellows in the State Department just raised both hands and shook their heads, and told us: ‘But such things can’t possibly be true!’ ”

VII

Everywhere in those days *Carranzista* generals could be seen disporting themselves in the *plaza*.

“If they’d get busy, couldn’t they clean up the bandits?” I asked an Old-Timer in Manzanillo.

“Quite likely. But that’s hard work. And they don’t really want to. If they licked all the bandits, the need for so many generals would cease. A general has a pretty good job, you know. Even though he doesn’t get so much salary, he pads his expense account with fodder that the horses never smell, and his payroll with the names of several hundred soldiers that don’t exist.”

He showed me the newspaper account of a battle

wherein General Somebody-or-Other with a force of four thousand men, had just defeated Villa in a bloody engagement.

“Now I happened to see the General start on that campaign. He had only two hundred men. And if my suspicion is correct, he never met Villa. It was a lot easier to sit down and write a telegram describing an imaginary victory. The President cited him for distinguished service, and he came home a hero. Carranza does the same thing. Instead of cleaning up the country, he just sends out reports telling the rest of the world that Mexico is now at perfect peace.”

VIII

Eustace and I occupied our enforced sojourn at Manzanillo by writing up the many stories we had gleaned from the Old-Timers, and mailing them home to newspaper editors.

If the American government still insisted most stubbornly in giving Carranza a chance to make good, the American public was waking up. Newspapers were beginning to publish accounts of Mexican outrages upon American citizens and their property. The American press was commencing to expose the Carranza régime.

So many were the stories coming up from Mexico that readers were prepared to believe anything. In

fact, they were ready to believe too much. For the news contained in the message we had dispatched upon our arrival in Manzanillo—"Foster and Eustace slain by bandits"—when disseminated by the worthy Mr. Werner, traveled rapidly to the border, and brought back to Manzanillo, from a former associate of mine in Nogales, a telegram inquiring about the details of our death.

Eustace and I regarded the whole affair as a joke.

We wrote my friend a joint letter, explaining that we had merely been captured by Zamorra, and had made our escape from his camp, after having thrashed him and his fellow cut-throats with our bare fists. And when at length the railway resumed operation, and we could resume our journey to Mexico City, we rode away, blissfully ignorant of the future consequences of that absurd letter, rejoicing that Manzanillo was a horror of the past. Having attacked President Carranza consistently in all our newspaper articles, we were eager to visit his capital to learn whether he were really so bad as we had pictured him.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEXICAN CAPITAL

I

IT was another four days' journey to Mexico City—a journey directly eastward and a trifle skyward.

Mexico is a mountainous country—so loftily mountainous that one has only to travel upward to pass in turn through every variety of climate and every type of landscape.

The road led from Manzanillo through the hot coastal plain—through palm-land and swamp-land where sweating, semi-naked *peons* waded knee-deep in pools formed overnight by the first downpour of a tropic rainy season—to Colima, a conventional little city at the base of a snow-tipped volcano—into the highlands through tortuous defiles where the cane gave way to maize and the jungle-growth to cactus—past tiny villages of adobe huts clustering about a huge white church that dwarfed the rugged gullies—into a climate of eternal spring—to Guadalajara, the second largest and the most delightful city of the republic, where orange trees were golden throughout the year—and beyond, to the wide expanses of Mexico's high plateau—to a land of vast,

gloomy spaces and lonely grandeur—the grandeur of rolling yellow plains stretching to a distant horizon rimmed with jagged peaks, where at twilight the purple shadows crept upward toward an azure sky—to a country desolate and superb, and a trifle wintry.

To the stay-at-home American, Mexico is only a sun-scorched desert. In reality, it is a land of everything—of sandy wastes, of rugged mountains, of rank tropical jungles, of temperate valleys—of lowlands bathed in moist tropic heat, of midlands where strawberries are always ripe, even of highlands swept eternally by chilling winds. Yet always there is some intangible spirit about it that makes it unmistakably Mexico, especially upon the bleak plateau.

II

The haunting melancholy of the high altitude seemed to have affected the natives.

Below, on the coast, the poverty-stricken Indians had appeared contented and happy. On the tableland they were very solemn. A *peon* marching behind his little burro wore the same stolid, pack-animal expression as the beast itself. There was no animation in the faces. The greater part of the masculine population sat upon the station platforms, wrapped in blankets and meditation, waiting only for another day to pass.

The women, more energetic than the men, still besieged the car windows, offering for sale the local products, not in the cheery manner of the lowland women, but hopelessly and mournfully, as though they expected that no one would buy. Unimaginative as the men-folks, they all sold the same article—whatever article some more energetic ancestor, many years before, had sold in their particular village. At Irapuato it was strawberries; at Celaya a species of fudge in tiny wooden boxes; at Queretaro opals from the neighboring mines; at San Juan del Rio lariats and ropes.

They waited in a bedraggled group as the train pulled in. They all advanced toward the same window. When the first customer did not buy, they shrugged their shoulders and turned away. Gradually it would dawn upon them that there were other passengers, and they would drift out along the sides of the other cars, holding up their baskets in mute appeal.

“It is *pulque*,” explained a Mexican fellow-passenger. “They are all sodden with it here. *Que borachos!* What drunkards!”

Pulque, the cheap liquor of the plateau, grows only in the highlands, and sours too quickly to be transported elsewhere. As we ascended toward the 7500-foot altitude of the capital, fields of *maguey*—the source of the beverage—became more and more frequent until they lined the railway in long even



THE CRANGE TREES IN GUADALAJARA'S PLAZA WERE GOLDEN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



MEXICO CITY, ONE OF THE MOST ORNATE CAPITALS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, SOMEWHAT RESEMBLED PARIS

rows that covered the rolling plains to the distant mountain-rim—each cactus resembling a huge blue artichoke, and adding another touch of color to the landscape. In blossoming, the plant sends up a tall stalk from which, if it be tapped, there flows a milky fluid locally known as “*aguamiel*” or “honey-water,” which ferments very rapidly. Within a few hours it becomes a mild intoxicant with a taste like that of sour buttermilk; within a few hours more it becomes a murder-inspiring poison with a taste which the most profane of mortals could never adequately describe.

In the fields *peons* could be seen, each with a pigskin receptacle slung over his back, trotting from plant to plant, climbing upon the pulpy leaves of the big cactus as though he were some little bug crawling into a flower, bending over the central pool to suck the liquid into a hollow gourd, and discharging it into the pigskin sack. When the bag was filled, he would trot away to the *hacienda* with it; a little stale *pulque* would start it fermenting; on the morrow a series of early trains, the equivalent of the milk trains elsewhere, would carry it to all the neighboring cities to befuddle the population there.

Drunkenness is extremely common in Mexico. Although *pulque* can not be widely distributed, the Mexicans boil the lower leaves of their cactus and distill therefrom their *mescal* and *tequila*—two fiery alcoholic stimulants condemned both by moralists

and by connoisseurs of good liquor—which are responsible for most of the acts of violence which transpire in the republic. Yet drunkenness is most prevalent in the highlands, for *pulque*, while comparatively mild, is the cheapest thing in Mexico, and one can buy a quart or two for a few pennies.

On each station platform the men sat patiently, waiting while the women offered their wares. The old girl probably would not make a sale, but *quién sabe?* If she did, there would be more money for *pulque*. Already sodden with it, they wrapped their tattered blankets about them, and watched fatalistically, inhabitants of the world's richest country, resigned to an empty life, oblivious to the charm of the most fascinating country on all the earth.

For despite its gloom, I know of no country more fascinating than the Mexican plateau.

In the clear mountain air each picturesque detail of the vast landscape stood out distinctly—the peaked hat of a little Indian plodding solemnly behind his burro—a herd of cattle grazing leisurely upon the coarse bunch-grass, mere brown specks against the yellow hills—a lonely white chapel with two slender towers and a massive dome, standing by itself without the suggestion of a possible worshiper within miles and miles—an infrequent *hacienda* with a host of tiny laborers' shacks grouped about a crumbling ranch-house that once had been a palace. Yet the indefinable charm of the scene lay not in the

details, but in the immensity of the canvas. Against the majestic sweep of the wasteland itself, the details appeared dwarfed and isolated. They gave one a feeling of utter loneliness—even of sadness—a strangely delicious sadness. A bleak, gloomy place was this plateau, yet many years hence, whenever one heard “Mexico,” one would think not of the desert or the jungle, but of these vast stretches of yellow wasteland and this horizon of purple mountains, and one would sense a haunting desire to see them again.

III

After two days upon that plateau, Mexico City was a shock.

The train roared into a crowded station. Vociferous hotel runners burst into the car and fought up and down the aisles. *Cargadores* clamored outside the windows. Mexican friends met Mexican friends with loud cries of joy. All screamed noisily to make themselves heard above the din of claxons from riotous streets outside.

Some runner, having driven rivals away from Eustace and myself, handed our suit-cases through the window to a waiting desperado, and we chased him frantically through the mob. Some chauffeur, having driven rivals away from the suit-cases, packed them inside a taxi, shoved us in after them,

and shot away at full speed the moment his assistant cranked the car, leaving the assistant to dodge aside and jump aboard as best he could, zigzagging madly through a fleet of other taxis, all of which were shrieking their claxons and roaring past with wide open cut-out, avoiding a dozen clanging trolley cars and scraping along the side of a thirteenth, pausing momentarily while a rabid policeman waved his arms and screamed abuse in voluble Spanish, then tearing onward as wildly as before through a world of leaping pedestrians.

We drew up with a grinding of brakes before a modern hotel, the chauffeur collected a modern fare, a hotel clerk grunted at us with modern incivility, a bell-hop conducted us with modern condescension to a modern room, and left us to spend a night of modern wakefulness listening to the nerve-wracking din of a thoroughly modern city outside.

After the plateau, it seemed profane. One had the illusion that in the midst of a grand cathedral service the bishop had given a college yell, the organ had burst into jazz, and the choir had danced an Irish jig.

IV

In the morning Eustace and I wrote President Carranza a friendly little note, requesting an interview. Then we set out to see the town,

It proved surprisingly attractive by daylight—one of the most ornate in the Western Hemisphere outside of Argentina or Brazil. If it lacked the impressive solidity of an American city, and failed to startle with giant sky-scrapers, it undoubtedly surpassed New York or any other Yankee metropolis—including Washington—in the beauty of its parks and boulevards.

Superficially it suggested Paris. Along the streets of its business section the buildings, all of the same height of three or four stories, were of European architecture. Its avenues and gardens, with their numerous statues and monuments, were distinctly French. There was a suggestion also of other lands. There were German beer halls and rathskellers, dignified English banks, Italian restaurants, and Japanese curio shops. There was even the American quick-lunch counter where a darky from Alabama asked abruptly, "What's yours, boss?" and shouted "One ham sandwich!" through a wall-opening to a white-capped cook. But French window-displays of modes and perfumery predominated, and combining with the architecture, gave the city the general aspect of Paris.

V

It proved a cool city, however, both in climate and manners. Of the two, the former seemed the more

kindly. If the air were chilly at morning or evening—either in summer or winter, wherein there is little variation—it was hot enough at mid-day to bring out the perspiration. But the manners remained constantly those of all large cities, even in Mexico.

There was no reason that they should be otherwise. After traveling, nevertheless, through smaller towns, where natives looked upon a newcomer with interest and other Americans immediately introduced themselves, we found that we were regarding the entire population of the capital as downright discourteous. Americans upon the street were not merely indifferent but suspicious. When we attempted to stop one to inquire the way to the National Museum, he would duck aside and hurry away before we could speak. We had about decided to punch the next fellow-countryman we met, and were looking for a small one, when we discovered the reason for American distrust.

Every fourth *gringo* in town seemed to be broke and in need of alms.

Two clean-cut youngsters, lured here evidently by the illusion that any one could make his fortune in Latin America, came into an American restaurant where we lunched, and begged the proprietor for a job washing dishes.

“For God’s sake, man, we’re hungry! And we’re willing to work! All we ask is our meals, and five

pesos a week to cover room rent—not a penny more!”

The proprietor shook his head.

“I’m sorry for them,” he said, as the youths went out, “but there’s too many. They use up all your sympathy.”

Another youth stopped us in the park.

“I’m not a regular bum,” he pleaded. “I came down here because a fellow I knew invited me. He was a Mexican, and he worked beside me in the auto factory up at Detroit. He was always telling me what a fine country this was. After he went home, he kept writing to me about how when I came to Mexico his house would be my house. I thought he meant it. And he kept saying there were lots of jobs. I didn’t know it was their habit to say nice things like that just to please you. I came down here three weeks ago, and there *were* no jobs—or else Mexicans took them on a salary that wouldn’t support an American—and when I looked up my friend, he kept saying that his house was my house, but I’ve never seen the inside of it, and since the first day I haven’t seen *him*. I’ve spent my last cent, and I’m up against it.”

But among the down and out were many less deserving, with stories just as good. Some were draft-evaders that had come to Mexico during the War, and had been unable to return. Others were professional vagabonds who had gravitated southward to

enjoy the privileges of a country that recognized vagrancy as a legitimate profession. At first, like most new arrivals touched by the pitiful sight of a fellow-countryman in misfortune in a foreign land, we gave liberally. But within a few days, we grew hardened, and like the Old-Timers, we ducked away at the very approach of a strange American, even though he merely wished to ask his way to the National Museum.

For companionship, we confined ourselves to Old Barlow, who occupied the hotel room next to ours, and who drifted into our quarters now and then to gratify an Old Resident's love of spinning yarns.

He was somewhat of a pessimist. He liked Mexico but he always carried a gun. A gray-haired man, walking with a slight limp, he claimed to have been present at every earthquake, revolution, and dog-fight that had ever transpired in Mexico or Central America, and when once started on a recital, each murder suggested another.

“Best thing I ever did see was the duel Cash Bradley fought. Cash didn't know nothing about swords, so when this geezer challenged him, he went up to ask General Agramonte for advice. Great old war-horse was Agramonte! Says he, ‘You don't need to know nothing about swords—except one little trick of swordsmanship I'm going to teach you. When you first start, the seconds will count three, and at each count you bring down your sword and clash

it politely with the other guy's sword by way of salute. Well, on the count of three, you just accidentally miss the other fellow's sword and salute him politely in the neck.' And believe me, boys, that little feat of swordsmanship just saved Cash Bradley's life."

Then he would puff at his pipe, and muse a while.

"Great old war-horse, Agramonte! I remember when he had a run-in with President Huerta, the bird Carranza chased out. Huerta invited him up to the Palace for tea, and when Agramonte was about to leave, he says to him, 'I've got forty soldiers on the staircase, waiting to shoot you on your way home.' Agramonte didn't blink an eyelash. He just shoved his own gun into Huerta's ribs, and answers, 'Then you'll come with me, and if one soldier raises a gun, you'll die first.' They walked down the staircase, arm in arm, and kissed each other good-by at the door, and not a soldier fired a shot."

Then he would muse again, rapturously, as though recalling pleasant memories.

"Huerta was some war-horse himself. He used to be a general in Madero's army, until he suddenly walked into the Palace, with his army behind him, and told Madero to quit. Huerta was always a great stickler for constitutionality, so he wanted Madero to sign a proper resignation. And Madero wouldn't resign. Huerta heated the poker and

started to tickle him with it. You could see the blood running out of Madero's eyes, but he was stubborn as a mule, and he just kept saying, 'I'm the rightful president of Mexico!' Finally Huerta had to shoot him. But he was a great stickler for constitutionality, so he put Madero's body in a coach, and took it out for a ride and had his troops fire a volley on the coach; then he told the world that Madero was shot by his own men while fleeing the country. Some one had to take the presidency then, so Huerta took it. Great stickler for constitutionality was Huerta!"

Another puff at his pipe.

"Carranza don't do his own shooting, but he's got plenty of generals to do it for him. If I was you boys, and had written some nasty things about the Old Gent, like you say you have, I wouldn't wait for no interview. I'd take the next train to Vera Cruz, and catch a boat."

VI

We waited for the interview. The chances were that nothing we had written would ever be published. If it were, Carranza would never know it. And there was more of Mexico City to be seen.

If it bore a superficial resemblance to Paris, its population remained distinctly Mexican.

In the early morning, upon the Avenida Francisco

I. Madero, the Mexican Fifth Avenue, the *boulevards* were mostly Indians in blankets, and shop girls hurrying to work with black shawls over their heads. Gradually they gave way to people in European dress, yet here and there in the crowd there passed an *hacendado* just in from his country estate and still wearing riding boots and *sombrero* and a huge revolver pendant from a heavy leather belt encircling his ample girth. Then came the shoppers—stout, overpowdered matrons with a flock of *señoritas* in tow—all in Parisian garb, but unmistakably Mexican. They came in handsome private cars, alighting with the assistance of uniformed attendants, and disappearing into the fashionable *modistes'* establishments with the grand aristocratic air of the newly rich—for most of the city's real aristocracy had fled the country during the long series of revolutions, and these were largely the wives and daughters of the successful generals.

At noon, the streets became almost deserted, for here as everywhere the *siesta* was a ritual, but later the crowd reappeared, and now for a brief hour the Avenida did bear some true resemblance to Paris. The womenfolk came out in their new finery, and rolled up and down in their handsome cars to display themselves. The men, having finished the day's work, loitered along the sidewalk, chatting merrily, twiddling their canes, puffing at their cigarettes, and keeping an attentive eye on passing femi-

ninity. But at twilight, the womenfolk disappeared, and the chill of evening brought an end to the atmosphere of gayety. The men still loitered, but the attentive eye was fixed now upon the shop-girls that hurried homeward.

“Why hasten, *chiquita?*” they called after each *mantilla*-muffled figure. “Come with me instead.”

Sometimes the male voices were serious. Usually they were casual, as though merely performing the rite—considered a sacred duty by the men of all Latin America—of insulting the unchaperoned woman. The girls were accustomed to it, and paid no attention either to the words or to the nudges and pinches that followed. Now and then there passed a street-walker—an institution seldom seen in the smaller Mexican cities, where vice is more carefully segregated—and she invited with a concentrated flash of eyes, but she did not speak, as might her counterpart in Paris. Over the crowded streets there hung an air of gravity—of Mexican gravity—the gravity of the high plateau.

Darkness came. The men pulled up their coat collars, pulled in their necks, and discussed the advisability of a cocktail. Lights appeared in thick clusters of glowing bulbs, as in the French capital, but they shed a radiance that inspired no gayety. The taxis still roared and rattled, and shot zigzag through the streets like so many skating-bugs on a millpond; the trolleys passed at thirty-foot intervals

incessantly clanging their gongs; the policemen at each corner turned their "*Alto-Adelante*" or "Go-Stop" signs first one way, then another, blowing their shrill whistles first with one toot, then two toots, and sending the traffic scurrying first in one direction, then another; above the Avenida there rose the grand discord of a busy metropolis; yet Mexico City became merely noisy rather than lively. Acquaintances embraced acquaintances demonstratively, yet with an air of conventionality. The loitering throngs before the blazing doorways of theaters or cinemas were subdued and solemn. The street-walkers invited with unsmiling eyes. The boulevardiers withdrew, group by group, for their cocktails, not to pleasant side-walk cafés like those of Paris, but to formal Spanish bar-rooms. By ten o'clock the sidewalks were almost as empty as those of Hermosillo. Only the flying taxis remained, dashing about with screeching claxons as though crying vainly, "This is Paris."

It looked like Paris, and from a distance it sounded like Paris, but the Parisian insouciance was missing. This was still Mexico—the Mexico of the high plateau.

VII

Carranza not proving very prompt in answering his correspondence, we amused ourselves with a visit

to the ancient pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacán—remnants of what had been a mighty empire before the Conquest—distant some twenty-eight miles from the Capital.

A leisurely train carried us there in something over an hour and a half. We descended at the station, expecting to be pounced upon by a dozen professional guides, but none molested us. Little barefoot children with spurious relics were our only assailants. We looked about for a conveyance and discovered the Toonerville Trolley. An individual asleep inside acknowledged that he was the conductor. He proved also to be the motorman, for having collected our fare, he aroused the mule, and the car jogged slowly away with swaying gait through lanes of cactus, toward the squat figures of two pyramids, deceitfully small with distance and dwarfed by the mountains behind them.

But at length the cactus-hedge ceased, and upon our right appeared the ruins of a temple—the Temple of Quetzacoatl—a big square surrounded by heavy ramparts of earth and stone, wherein a group of workmen were restoring a wall lined with monster demon-heads and gargoyles carved of solid rock. And a few minutes later we were at the foot of the pyramids, no longer small and dwarfed, but looming skyward above us—pyramids which, if less imposing in stature than those of Egypt, excel them in the dimensions of their base, and may even antedate

them, according to the estimates of some archeologists, by possibly a thousand or two thousand years.

Speculation as to just how old they really are has kept many a scientist out of worse mischief, but seems to have accomplished little else. Thanks to the demolition by the fanatical Spaniards of the heathen writings they found in the Americas, practically nothing is known of their origin. It is believed that they antedate the Toltecs, and that they testify to the existence of an ancient race in Mexico, long since vanished to who-knows-where, that once surpassed in engineering skill and presumably in civilization the early peoples of the other Hemisphere.

So little had we read of them, and so free did they appear from exploitation as a tourist sight, that Eustace and I experienced almost the joy of personal discovery. But it was soon rudely shattered. For up drove an automobile from Mexico City's leading hotel, and out climbed two other Americans.

They were recognizable immediately as Rotarians. They were both good fellows. They had met at the Regis, and in talking over business had discovered that both by profession were Realtors. They had found a mutual bond of interest in the fact that Mexico City, although it *was* a better burg than they had anticipated, had a less up-to-date garbage-disposal system than Long Branch, N.J., or Newburyport, Mass. They were now having a whale of a

time kidding the guide good-naturedly about the shortcomings of his country, and were getting to like each other better every minute. Next week, upon their return home, each would tell his friends about the good scout he bumped into down in Mexico, and would exclaim, "It beats all how you meet people! The world's a pretty small place after all!" And at Christmas, each would send the other a card playfully addressed "Senor."

"So that's what you brought us out here to see!" said the man from Long Branch.

The other drew out a guide-book and read:

"The pyramid of the Sun Tonatiuh Itzcuatl damn this language anyhow a truncated artificial mound 216 feet high by about 721 and 761 feet at the base divided into five pyramidal sections or terraces which narrow as they ascend. Now that we've seen that, where do we eat?"

We left them below while we started up the long flight of stone steps that led up the five terraces of the larger pyramid, The Sun. It had been partially restored, and its surface of many-colored rocks, each the size of a domesticated cobblestone, originally held together with adobe, now gleamed white with Portland Cement. Upon its lofty top, covered today by a flat rock, there had once been a gigantic statue of the Sun, cut from a block of porphyry, and ornamented with gold. And here the Aztec priests had probably plunged their arms into many a vic-



THE MEXICAN PYRAMIDS PROBABLY ANTEDATE THOSE OF EGYPT BY A THOUSAND YEARS OR MORE



IN THE GARDENS OF XOCHIMILCO, RELICS OF AN AZTEC PARADISE, ONLY THE CABBAGES WERE IN BLOOM

tim's breast, to draw out a beating heart, and toss the body of the sacrifice down the steep rocky sides to the wasteland beneath.

It was very quiet now, with the restful calm that one finds only upon a mountain-top. One could look down upon miles and miles of rolling plain dotted with cactus of many shades of green, clustering sometimes in prickly forests, stretching away in two parallel lines to mark a trail, arranging themselves in military rows to indicate a *pulque* hacienda, gathering in a hedge about the low flat roof of an adobe homestead. Here or there rose the unfailing spires and dome of another lonely church. In the fields a yoke of oxen, plowing a cornfield, seemed scarcely to move. The sky above was of vivid blue, with puffy white clouds along the horizon. Sounds drifted up from the world below—the mooing of a cow, the cackle of a hen, the tap of a hammer—each very distinct, yet so softened by distance that it seemed not to interrupt the silence—as though it merely came from a far-away land wherewith one had severed connection.

Then the two tourists came panting up the steps.

“Damn those stairs, anyway. They ought to have a railing on each side.”

Eustace blandly suggested an elevator, but the sarcasm was lost.

“We'd have one, if this was in Newburyport. We'd have a regular train service out here, and

we'd put in a modern cafeteria. Boy, but you could make money out of this thing, if you had it in the United States! You could hire a bunch of Irishmen and dress them up like Aztecs, have a couple of girls doing an Indian dance on top, charge a fifty-cent admission—why, man, you'd clean up a fortune!"

As we started down to catch the evening train back to the taxi-screeching City of Mexico, Babbitt and Kennicott were carving their initials on the flat rock atop the Pyramid of the Sun.

VIII

A week drifted past, and Sunday arrived.

On that, of all days, Mexico City was most typically Mexican.

The aristocrats paraded themselves in the parks; the middle-classes went picnicking; the *peons* went to church.

We strolled out along the Avenida Madero, past the National Opera House—said to be the handsomest building of its kind on the continent, but still with an unfinished dome because one administration had started it, and others had neglected to provide funds for its completion. Beyond it lay the *Alameda*, the Mexican Central Park. It was a European park, quite unlike the palm-grown *plazas* of the smaller cities, but there was the usual Mexican band concert, and the people were renting camp-chairs

along the shady walks to enjoy the national pastime of seeing and being seen.

Beyond the *Alameda*, commenced a wide boulevard, the *Paseo de la Reforma*, typically Parisian in its wealth of monuments, and lined with handsome embassies and residences, leading out to Chapultepec, a larger and even more charming park, with wide expanses of lawn and woodland and lake and meadow surrounding the National Palace, a squatly fortress-like structure pleasing in its effect of strength and beauty, perched upon high cliffs and glimpsed through the tree-tops as though it hung suspended in the sky. The policemen here were clad in Mexico's *charro* costume—the costume of the old grandees—with short buff jacket, skin-tight blue trousers lined with rows of silver buttons, flowing red tie, huge velvet *sombrero*, and a big gleaming sword. An orchestra in similar costume held forth beneath an awning near the lake, playing sweetly upon a marvelous combination of guitars, mandolins, marimbas, harps, cellos, oboes, and what not. Automobiles rolled past along the winding driveway, each filled with a bevy of *señoritas*. Horsemen rode grandly past, dressed also in *charro* costume, and mounted upon the finest steeds in Mexico. Pedestrians idled beside the lake, watching the procession, and listening to the orchestra, with that rare enjoyment of really good music that characterizes *peon* and aristocrat alike. Here, as in the

small-town plaza, the Mexicans were finding a pleasure in their park such as no American ever finds in the parks of the United States. Here, as everywhere in Mexico, a public garden was not merely a place for the perambulation of baby carriages by nursemaids, but an institution of which even society took full advantage.

Having seen the aristocrats in action, we caught a trolley out to the floating gardens of Xochimilco to observe the middle-class picknickers. It was a profanely modern trolley, with a "No Spitting" sign, and rimmed with lurid posters from which "Wrigley" and "Colgate" peeped out from a conglomeration of Spanish, and it carried us through streets whose buildings were defaced either by countless advertisements or countless warnings not to post advertisements. But presently it left the city behind, and raced out through maize-fields and *maguey* fields, and dropped us at a quaint little town, complete even to cathedral-fronted *plaza*.

Tiny children, their arms laden with flowers, surrounded us, sticking bouquets into our buttonholes and pockets, and pleading for "a little *centavito*." They were irresistible. Dressed exactly like their elders in long skirts and mantillas, and with the mature air characteristic of Mexican children, they seemed like little dwarfed adults. Their voices were caressing, and they would retreat whenever we tried to return their bouquets without purchasing.

“Ah, no, *señor!* Buy them from me! A little *centavito*, no more!”

Looking rather like floating gardens ourselves, we drifted toward the canals. These were the remnants of the great network of waterways that the Spanish conquistadores saw when first they entered the Valley of Mexico. In those days, before Modern Progress decreed that the Valley should be drained, Mexico City was a Venice, upon whose lakes there floated rafts of interlaced twigs, covered with rich soil, and blossoming with flowers. Xochimilco was the last survival of the Aztec floral paradise, and it proved distinctly disappointing.

A barefoot boatman met us, holding up a piece of paper upon which was written in English, “Do you want one bot? I have a fin bot.”

He led us to a dugout canoe, with an awning supported by vine-laced framework, and paddled us out through a canal where native women were washing clothes or cleaning chickens, under a bridge emblazoned with “Drink Moctezuma Beer,” and along a waterway lined with decaying rafts covered with a luxuriant growth of carnations, cane, eucalyptus, and cabbages, of which only the last-named seemed to be in bloom. Parties of picknickers drifted past us in larger boats, each with a table in the center, at which every one was busily eating. Along the way were restaurants and refreshment rooms, each with an orchestra of one fiddle, one guitar, and one bass-

drum, which started to play at our approach and quit as soon as we passed, the bass-drummer invariably outspeeding and outdrowning his collaborators. The final exhibit, at the far end of the canal, was the city waterworks.

We came back to the churches to see the *peons*.

At the central Zocalo, or main *plaza*, a rather dusty square with a few bedraggled palm trees, where once had stood an Aztec pyramid, there now stands the famous Cathedral of Mexico. Mexicans will inform one that it is the largest and handsomest cathedral in the hemisphere, although it is much smaller than the Peruvian Cathedral, and one of the least handsome churches in Mexico itself. There are really two edifices, joined together like the Siamese twins; each with a façade of elaborately carved gray sandstone against a background of cracked red basalt, pierced by many little windows in which repose mildewed green bells.

This, essentially, is the church of the common people. Society attends a more exclusive church on the Avenida Madero, where the women (always devout) go inside to mass, and the men (usually agnostic) remain at the gate to ogle them as they make their exit. There one finds the dim light, the subdued air, and the solemnity of churches in other lands. There is none of it in the Cathedral.

Everything in the huge edifice was bright and gaudy and noisy. Many windows flooded it with

light. Glittering gilt ornamentation was everywhere. The priests wore green and yellow robes. The choir sang enthusiastically and loudly, without evidence of training, as though each would outsing his fellows both in volume and speed. Services were proceeding simultaneously in both halves of the institution, and each seemed trying frantically to drown out the other.

Yet this, offensive even to one of mediocre taste, impressed the *peons* for whom it was intended. They knelt at the door and lighted their candles. Then they crept forward upon their knees—ragged little brown devils, unwashed, unshaven, and unlaundered—many of them still a trifle *pulque*-sodden from a *fiesta* of the night before. This noise and display thrilled them as no solemn service could thrill them. As they crept forward, with arms extended, expressions of rapt ecstasy almost ennobled their villainous faces. Their sins were forgiven! To-morrow, with that odd mixture of idealism and materialism so characteristic of their race, they would start sinning again with a clean conscience.

These ragged little devils were the pawns of a long series of revolutions. To-day, while the successful generals rode grandly through Chapultepec, the *peons* who had won their battles and gained nothing turned to the Cathedral for solace. One might not believe in their religion, but one was

forced to admit that they found comfort. And certainly they needed it.

IX

To avoid religion as a delicate subject, as most writers do, is to ignore a most important phase of Mexican life.

In Mexico, even more than in most parts of Latin America, the Church has been obliged, to the regret of many of its own clergymen, to sacrifice much of its dignity. It came originally to a land which already possessed a religion consisting solely of barbaric rites. It was adopted by a people whose conception of things ecclesiastic was limited to the meaningless observance of pagan ceremonials. And these people, as a whole, to-day attend mass and march about in procession without any very definite idea of what the Church means, in much the same fashion as in days of old they followed their Aztec priests. Even in more intelligent circles, the Church must cater to a racial mind which concerns itself not with substance but with form and cares little about creed or doctrine so long as it can maintain outward appearances by elaborate ceremony. And since the rank and file of the clergy come from the same sort of people, the Church in Mexico has become largely theatrical.

Religion, in short, caters here to a primitive mind. It has many difficulties wherewith to contend. Be-

cause its earliest leaders were gaining such authority among the *peons*, the government placed severe restrictions upon them. To-day no foreign priest is allowed to conduct services. No native priest may appear upon the street in clerical garb. No collections may be taken at mass. No church may own its property, which the government holds and permits it to use. And church bells may ring but one minute out of every hour.

Yet the clergy still has a tremendous hold upon the people. It abides by the letter of the law. The bells ring for one minute only, but they ring loudly and with rapid strokes. The churches, although no collections are taken, are filled with boxes for offerings. Mexico is covered with chapels and shrines, religious holidays number about three hundred and sixty-five a year, and the custom of pilgrimage is well established. Practically the entire population professes the Catholic faith.

Of all the many shrines, that of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, is the most popular. According to legend, a poor Indian on his way to mass met the Virgin Mary at this spot, and was sent to the Bishop with the command that a church should be erected here. When the Bishop was incredulous, the *peon* brought him a bunch of roses plucked from a barren hillside. Convinced that a miracle had transpired, the Bishop erected the church, and it became at once so popular that a deluge of miracles

swept all over Mexico, and every other good friar erected a chapel. But none has ever rivaled that of Guadalupe.

It is situated only a brief distance from the capital. A trolley took Eustace and myself there, stopping at a small square filled with rude stands under improvised awnings where Indians sold soft drinks, beads, edibles, and candles. Before the square stood a church and a merry-go-round. Above it, reached by a long flight of winding stone steps, there stood a small white chapel.

On each step sat a crippled beggar, seemingly a poor advertisement for a shrine that purports to heal all ailments. Yet the Mexicans saw no inconsistency in this, and no irreverence in the merry-go-round nor in the host of tin-type photographers who had set up their stands upon the vestibule of the church. Many of the Indians who pilgrimaged here had come from the farthest ends of the republic, making the journey on foot, and supporting themselves by plying along the way whatever trade they possessed. Most of them sold trinkets, and were now selling them at the shrine itself.

The flight of steps was long and steep. On certain holidays, the faithful were accustomed to ascend it slowly upon their knees. In the high altitude, it was sufficiently arduous to walk up. But the little chapel on the hilltop was white and clean and simple. Behind it lay a very peaceful, fragrant cemetery,

neatly kept, with many flowers. One wall was honey-combed with tiny little alcoves, where one might rent "*Nichos para restos perpetuedad* \$100.00"—"permanent niches for corpses at 100 pesos"—or niches to be paid for by the year or month, with the penalty, in case of non-payment, of seeing the ancestral bones consigned to the scrap-heap. But there were graves and tombs as well, many of them so handsome as to suggest that even while Guadalupe, like the Cathedral, was mainly a *peon* institution, the aristocrats sometimes came here after death.

Descending by another long flight of steps, we came to the Chapel of the Well—another small chapel under a big dome of glittering tiles, containing a well of curative waters. Ecstatic *peons*, their faces shining with joy, were lowering a bucket and drinking, seizing the receptacle from one another's hands in their eagerness. At a near-by counter, where crosses were sold, and ribbons marked with the measure of the Virgin's head or feet, one might also obtain empty bottles—some of them still bearing unhallowed labels—and these the natives filled at the well for their fellow-villagers at home.

Turning around the corner, we came back to the larger church. In its cellar was the evidence of the cures effected. There was the usual pile of crutches to be seen in all healing shrines. The wall was covered with letters of thanks, letters accompanied invariably with pictures, as though their authors, who

in their inability to read or write had been forced to dictate their messages to a professional scribe, assumed that their Benefactor was equally illiterate. Many of them were from supplicants who could not reach the shrine, describing their troubles and begging assistance. The illustrations showed them being run over by a trolley-car, shot in battle, caught between two colliding steam engines, massacred in other startling fashions or confined to a gloomy sick-bed. There was one of papa looking out from between prison bars, with a note from the family asking the Virgin to soften the heart of the Magistrate. And there was one from a very pretty young girl, inclosing her photograph, and thanking the Virgin—with an absence of detail that piqued one's curiosity—for having given her what she most desired. The writing was frequently illegible, the words misspelled, and the paintings execrably done by the very worst of artists. Yet groups of *peons*, surveying them, murmured their admiration of the bright coloring, and exclaimed aloud with astonishment at the marvelous cures.

No other church could so satisfy the Mexican *peon*.

x

We came back from Guadalupe to find a uniformed Staff-Officer awaiting us. Old Barlow was entertaining him in our absence.



MEXICAN POLICEMEN IN WHITE SPATS

The officer was a young man, in neat-fitting blue uniform, and he had keen, sharp features. He wore a little black mustache, like that of the villain from a melodrama. He was suavely polite.

“Mario Sanchez, aide to his excellency, Venustiano Carranza, President of the Republic of Mexico, at your service, *señores!*”

We bowed. There was a cool reserve about him that told us he did not expect to be kissed.

“You are the *Señores* Foster and Eustace, I believe, the authors of these newspaper articles that I here display?”

We stared in amazement at a sheaf of clippings which he held before us. Our writings had been published! The news of our death, followed by a letter describing our heroic escape from Pedro Zamorra, had brought us fame! We were headlined on front pages! And our articles about Mexico had all found a market! We were successful free-lance newspaper correspondents!

“But where on earth did you get them?” demanded Eustace, incredulously.

The officer smiled.

“My government keeps a careful check upon writers who discuss our administration in the United States. And you have honored us with a request for an interview. It is customary, of course, that such requests come through the American Embassy, but in this case, we are very pleased that it has not.

President Carranza will grant the interview on one condition—that you tell not the Embassy you are coming. To-morrow evening, I shall call for you, but you must come with me, very quietly, to the Palace, telling no one. I can not now explain. But it is very important that you tell no one. Until to-morrow evening, at the eight o'clock. *Adios, señores.* I am your humble servant.”

With another deep bow, he withdrew.

We turned, mystified, to Old Barlow. He was strangely nervous.

“Pack your suit-cases and beat it!” he advised. “I know these devils—polite as they can be, and damned likeable, but don’t you trust them. You heard him say, ‘Tell no one!’ He’ll take you away in a car, and not a soul on earth will ever see you again, or learn what’s happened to you. So beat it just as fast as you can!”

We packed our suit-cases. We bade each other farewell. Eustace was determined to go back to Manzanillo, and catch a boat to San Francisco. I was determined to go to Vera Cruz, catch a boat for Cuba, and see something more of Latin America before I returned home. Only one thing was certain. The expedition had reached a temporary halt.

CHAPTER IX

INTERMISSION

I

THERE was nothing thrilling about my escape from Mexico. I simply rode down the railway to Vera Cruz, boarded a steamer without molestation, and sailed away.

The reflection that I was now a fugitive gave me a sense of international importance. It did seem a trifle uncomplimentary on the part of the Mexican government that no one sought to interfere with my departure. Still, there are some little slights that one is willing to overlook, especially if one be a fugitive.

II

Fellow travelers were always interested in my story.

Occasionally I ran across persons who had heard of my thrilling escape from the bandit camp of Pedro Zamorra. They demanded details. They were so insistent that it would have been a shame to disappoint them. I licked bandit after bandit for their benefit until completely fatigued.

Then, having begun to lose my original pride at the fictitious exploit, I adopted a policy of modest silence. Or I admitted, "That was all bunk!" This seemed to make it the more convincing.

"He's reticent," they said, "like all great heroes."

III

Inspired by this success, I decided to quit freelancing and become a fiction writer. I set out to roam the world in search of material. Since editors seldom bought the fiction I wrote, I roamed mostly on foot.

In various odd corners of the globe, I found other people who once had lived in Mexico. Most of them had fled the country during the long series of revolutions. Their property had been destroyed. In some cases their loved ones had been murdered. Yet I discovered—at first to my amazement—that they were all dreaming of the day when conditions would become settled, and permit them to return.

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. There's *something* about that country. You can't explain it."

I wandered through the West Indies—to South America—to the Orient. I found many lands more colorful than Mexico, where native customs were more interesting, where foreigners were more wel-

come. Yet I found none that I liked so well, except Costa Rica, its Central-American neighbor. There gradually came to me a haunting desire to return. And when Carranza gave place to Obregon, and Obregon proceeded to restore peace and order, I packed my suit-case for another trip to Mexico—and to the other little republics to the southward.

“Why?” asked every one at home.

“Oh, I don’t know. There’s something about that country. You can’t explain it.”

IV

My return was as uneventful as my flight.

I rather expected each Mexican I met to exclaim, “So you’re the fellow that wrote all those dastardly things about my country!” Apparently a few had forgotten my articles. The others had not heard of them.

I landed at Vera Cruz, and went up to the capital over the same railway—up through gorges luxuriant with forests of banana, past the snow-capped peak of Orizaba looming mistily out of the clouds, through tunnels and over bridges, along mountain sides where one looked down upon checkerboard farms as though one glimpsed them from an airplane, across the magnificent plateau where yellow wasteland stretched away to a purple horizon, and into the roar and bustle of Mexico City.

The capital had changed but little. If anything, it was noisier than before. Advertising posters defaced every wall. The taxis had multiplied like guinea pigs. Radios added a new note to the discord of modern progress. The *señoritas* had bobbed their hair. Old Barlow alone remained the same.

I stopped just long enough to make inquiries about Eustace. Since our parting, over four years ago, I had never heard a word from him.

“No one has!” said Old Barlow. “You were the lucky one that time. The other lad just disappeared—like I predicted both of you would. Just vanished, God knows where!”

I went back down the railway to Córdoba, to continue southward alone through Mexico and Central America.

CHAPTER X

THE LAND OF THE INDIAN VAMPS

I

THE railway southward into the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the worst in Mexico.

It had been constructed back in the days of Diaz, and apparently had not been repaired since that time. A rusty engine that wheezed with asthma dragged behind it a long succession of splintered freight cars, followed by an aged wooden passenger coach whose walls groaned and protested at every jolt, and swayed sidewise until the roof threatened to fall.

From Córdoba, on the main line, the track squirmed away with snake-like course into the tropical jungles of the coastal plain. At times it passed a pineapple farm or a banana plantation; usually it ran through unbroken forest. The vegetation was riotous. Moss covered the trees, plants sprouted from the moss, vines crept upward among the plants and dropped their creepers from the limbs, and a thousand other varieties of parasitic growths twined upward along the creepers. The rampageous wil-

derness encroached upon the track so aggressively that a passenger could not lean from the car windows; it grew up between the tracks, and sprouted from holes in the rotting ties.

Our progress was leisurely. First a freight car jumped the rail. We waited three hours while the engine left us and sought a wrecking crew. Then, as soon as the wrecking crew had corrected the difficulty and departed, the same car did the same thing, and continued to repeat, until we reached a siding, where the trainmen left it with all its contents, presumably to rot in the jungle.

Then there was more delay. Another train was expected from the opposite direction, but no one seemed to know just where we might meet it, so the engineer proceeded cautiously. We met it head-on at a dangerous curve, both engines stopping with a shriek of brakes, and bumping gently. The two train crews then engaged in heated argument as to which should back up ten miles to the nearest station to let the other pass. There was speculation among the passengers as to whether the debate would be settled with knives or by a pushing match between the two engines. The conductors finally tapped a telegraph wire, and consulted headquarters, and received a decision in favor of our own train. Thereupon the other backed, very slowly as though to maintain its dignity and give us as little satisfaction as possible, and ours followed a few feet behind,

both engineers hurling Mexican curses at each other from the car windows.

As always, the native passengers took things with fatalistic unconcern. They expected to miss connections at Rio Blanco, and be another day or two upon their journey, but they merely shrugged their shoulders. One must take things as they come in travel, *señor!* So far, this had been an unusually good trip. Cars always jumped the rail on this line. It was not extraordinary to be stranded eighteen hours or so in the jungle here, without food and water—unless one took the precaution, observed by the more experienced travelers, of bringing provisions. They shrugged their shoulders again, lighted their cigarettes, and amused themselves at each delay by setting up a beer bottle in the jungle, and shooting at it with their big revolvers, which seemed to be quite as essential a part of a Mexican's equipment to-day as in the more turbulent times of Carranza.

And, as always in Mexico, everything turned out all right. Although we crawled into Rio Blanco five hours late, it developed that the connecting train had been similarly delayed. There was a hurried lunch at a railway restaurant, where the waitresses had been blonds before the local supply of peroxide gave out but now wore the Princeton colors. Then the journey proceeded upon another line, which, if possible, was worse than the one before.

II

In the days of Diaz, the Mexican railways had been built by Americans, and were under American management.

They had now become a political football, however, operated by the government not because they were thus more profitable or efficient, but because they thus offered employment to deserving voters. The railway men, of course, knew something of rail-roading, and the Vera-Cruz-Mexico-City road—as well as the other more important roads—was kept in repair. But the Obregon government, although an improvement over its predecessors, was still maintaining itself by force, and after paying its generals, had little money left for keeping in order such railways as those that meandered through its southern jungles.

President Obregon's term was drawing to a close; there was soon to be an election; there had never been an election in Mexico without a revolution; in view of the forthcoming excitement, work of any kind was practically at a stand-still. An escort of troops was still to be seen on every train—better-uniformed and equipped than in the days of Carranza, but with the same villainous faces. And a garrison was lined up at the platform of each hamlet through which we passed—a small garrison, so that towns could be classified as one, two, three, four, or

five soldier towns—a mere handful of men, but always present.

Conditions had improved during my four years' absence from the country, but the land was by no means so pacific and prosperous as Obregon's propaganda—circulated widely through the United States at the moment when Obregon was seeking recognition by our State Department—had led Americans to believe. Mexico was still Mexico.

III

It was quiet, and peaceful, and sunny, however, as always.

This southern Mexico was a paradise of tropic luxuriance. On the infrequent banana plantations the foliage was so thick that the tunnels beneath the trees were black as night. The jungle not only slapped the face of any passenger who poked his head from the window; it even scratched along the sides of the car, seeking an opportunity to reach inside and stick a thorn into the passenger's eye.

The air was hot and moist. Inhabitants had reduced clothing to a minimum. Naked children ran races with the engine. The ox-drivers, leading their patient yokes with a barbed pole, wore only a straw hat, a pair of pants, and a *machete*—a big two-bladed knife—wherewith to hack their way through the undergrowth. The women were garbed in what

appeared to be a thin, loose-flowing nightgown. The houses were of cane and thatch, festering usually in pools of filth. Swarms of pigs came out at each stopping-place to nose about in search of the melon-rinds or fruit-skins that passengers might contribute to their welfare. The people, lolling usually in hammocks of grass-rope, surveyed us with interest, but made little effort to sell us anything.

Here was the true languor of the tropics, and the train conformed. We were supposed to reach Santa Lucrecia, the next transfer-point, at 8.30 in the evening, but in this country a railway schedule is much like a party platform in the United States. Night descended. Dew saturated the jungle, and the branches swishing past the windows sprinkled every one inside the car. A golden moon peeped out from a rank mass of silver clouds, and fitted through the palm-fronds for hour after hour. There was a brief halt at another railway restaurant, where a sleepy proprietor had given up all hope of the train's arrival. He brought out cold rice, and heated coffee. Milk, *señor?* *Ay*, but although there were cows, the people here did not bother to milk them. If one wished to buy a can of condensed milk, yes, but it was expensive in this country.

We finally crawled into Santa Lucrecia at 2.40 the next morning. A boy led me upstairs to a room in the station hotel. There was a canvas cot there with a sheet badly soiled. But, *señor*, it had been washed

only last week! And its occupants since that time had all been white persons, except one! The boy's tone implied, "What more do you want?" So I turned in, and fell promptly asleep, lulled by the scratching of cockroaches upon the wall. And here—alone of all the station stops I found in Mexico—one could sleep late the next morning, for the train, instead of starting at sun-up, did not leave for Tehuantepec until noon.

Santa Lucrecia was a straggling village of tin and thatch, perched upon stilts as a precaution against the floods of the rainy season, its several houses connected by ramshackle board walks. Although in the center of the isthmus, it had an altitude of only twenty-six meters above the sea; its air was dank and humid and depressing. Its inhabitants lived on the porch, usually in hammocks, which, although not completely bug-proof, gave the insects the trouble of scaling a wall and finding their way across a hook before they could reap their harvest. All intimate daily functions were performed in public, preferably on some conspicuous knoll or hilltop, as though the town were eager to proclaim itself a formidable rival in filth and vileness to Manzanillo.

But my fellow passengers were cheerful.

"It is a frightful place," they agreed. "But wait, *señor*, wait! To-night you shall be at Tehuantepec—in the land of marvelous women! So big, so strong, so beautiful! They do all the work, while a man has

but to lie in the shade and rest. You will like Tohuantepec, *señor!*”

IV

The noon train carried me over a better road, across a range of mountains, and down the sandy slopes of the Pacific coast, into an oasis of waving coco-palms, and dropped me in the city of the far-famed Indian vamps.

The entire female population was lined up at the station, each with a basket of cocoanuts.

I had already heard much about their attractiveness, for every travel writer makes it a point to rave about them. They are described always as “sloe-eyed queens of the tropics, with the figures of a golden-bronze Venus, clad in oriental garments of vivid color that do not quite meet at the waist.” They are said to be of passionate and jealous nature. But for several years I had been hearing, throughout my travels, of women somewhere just ahead who were like that, wherefore I was not surprised, upon descending to the station platform at Tehuantepec, to discover that the far-famed beauties were smoking eight-inch cigars.

A few of the younger ones were handsome. Their skin was a light brown, their eyes large and dark, their hair long and jet-black, their teeth white and regular, their lips red and sensual. They were a



THE TEHUANA MAIDENS REGARDED A MAN AS A LUXURY
RATHER THAN A NECESSITY

trifle larger than most tropical Indians, with magnificent, sturdy figures. But at least two-thirds of them were pock-marked. And although they wore the costume described—a little jacket of brilliant color, and a short skirt also of brilliant hue—most of the garments *did* meet at the waist, and those that showed a brief strip of Tehuana lady were worn by extremely aged Tehuana lady, and were not at all romantic. For what was sturdiness in the younger maidens became monstrous bulk in their elders. They were majestically fat, solidly fat, with a weight that must have amounted to three hundred pounds each. The writers had told the truth about their figures. They had all the truck-horse characteristics of the Venus de Milo herself.

I looked upon them with awe. I stood for a moment upon the platform, reviewing the stories I had heard of their passionate nature, and their aggressiveness toward the males who fell into their clutches. And even as I reviewed these stories, the women, having seen me, made a concerted rush. But having surrounded me, they merely removed their eight-inch cigars from their far-famed lips, and chorused:

“Buy my cocoanuts, *señor!* Two cocoanuts for five cents!”

A barefoot youth came to my rescue, shouldered my suit-case, and led the way to Tehuantepec's one hotel.

Tehuantepec, although the largest city in population on the Isthmus, is merely a big Indian village. Its streets are sometimes rudely cobbled, but usually of sand. It lies in a wide, fertile valley, straddling a shallow river. In the center its buildings are of heavy white stucco roofed with red tile. Elsewhere its dwellings are of thatch, and straggle up the surrounding mountain cliffs or out among the vast groves of waving coco-palms. None of the merchants have bothered to advertise on their shops the nature of their business, for travelers seldom come there, and the natives all know one another and one another's occupation, which is usually that of selling cocoanuts to one another.

There is a *plaza*, but it is a very inferior *plaza*, fronted by a ramshackle church. In towns where there is an element of Spanish blood, this would be the center of all activity. But Tehuantepec is of almost pure Indian population, and its interests are in the native market.

When Cortez first came to Mexico, he and his followers were amazed at the size of the Indian markets. To-day no village is so tiny but that it has a public square devoted to bartering, even though it

may have nothing else. Usually it is a stone-paved courtyard beneath a sheet-iron roof. From the rafters hang raw-hide thongs, lassos, saddles, gaudy blankets, bunches of bananas, and miscellaneous drygoods. The entire floor is covered with great heaps of Indian pottery, jugs and pots and kettles of earthenware. Tables, arranged in long rows, are laden with piles of big round cakes resembling maple sugar, with gravelly hills of flour, salt, spaghetti, beans, and corn, with strings of red or green peppers, slabs of meat, bleary-eyed fish, and everything else imaginable. Flies swarm everywhere. Turkeys are tied to the posts that support the roof. Ducks and chickens, their legs hobbled or broken, lurch from side to side in a futile effort to gain their feet. Dogs slink through the crowd. Buzzards hop about the floor. The whole effect is of confusion and bedlam.

The Mexican loves the noise and excitement of such a place. So ingrained is his fondness for it that a native on his way to market will sometimes refuse to sell his goods for any price along the road. In the few shops outside the square, the clerks are listless; in the market, every one is animated. People selling the same articles group themselves together, for it stimulates competition. Let a potential purchaser stop before one woman to glance at *tortillas*, and a dozen other *tortilla*-vendors hiss to attract attention. Here rules the great game of cheat-as-cheat-can.

There is no credit. There is no mutual confidence. The merchant tests each coin; the purchaser tests each purchase. Women buying hens ruffle up the feathers and examine the bird carefully. Every one watches the scales. And every one enjoys it hugely.

But nowhere in Mexico is there a market more animated than that of Tehuantepec.

It is essentially a feminine market. Years ago, the men of the Isthmus were practically annihilated in local warfare. For a long time the women outnumbered them by a ratio of five to one; they learned to do their own work; men became to them a luxury rather than a necessity; and to-day the position of the sexes—most strangely, in Mexico—has become completely reversed. In most markets, women predominate. In Tehuantepec so few males are evident that a visitor strolling among the counters feels like Al Jolson surrounded by the Winter Garden chorus.

It was very clean—as compared with similar bartering places elsewhere. Usually such places were overpowering in their odor of sweaty femininity. In Tehuantepec, however, the ladies were addicted to a daily bath, the prettier and younger ones taking it after dark, the elder ones in broad daylight, when they were to be seen disporting their massive bulks in the river that intersected the town, quite untroubled by the attention they received from the military garrison on the neighboring railway bridge.

Despite the comparative scarcity of males, the usual number of babies were in evidence. Each market-woman had an infant slung over her shoulder in a gayly-colored *reboso*—the invaluable Mexican shawl, which serves as towel, handkerchief, wrap, carry-all for bringing produce home, and also as a crib. While mother bargained, she fed her offspring. The loose vest-like jacket was designed for such an operation, as was the alternative garment, a low-cut lace-frilled chemise. And she fed her offspring mechanically, without once taking her attention from the business of haggling. A quick jerk of one shoulder, and the *reboso* with its infantile contents swung to the front; a heated argument continued uninterruptedly with shoppers who maintained that *her* goods were inferior to those of the lady squatted cross-legged on her right; another quick jerk, and the child swung around again to her back.

So busy were the women that they paid no attention to the few men—mostly soldiers—who strolled about. If these were the vamps that writers have proclaimed throughout the ages, one saw no evidence of the fact in the market. They were the least sex-conscious women that I have seen anywhere in Latin America. The Spanish *señoritas* of other parts, no matter how modest their deportment, were always supremely aware of the presence of a man. These Indian girls were intent upon their haggling; in

their rush to sell their goods, they bumped the lounging men aside as though quite unaware of their existence. Once in a while, when business lulled, they glanced up to survey me casually, since I looked out of place among gaudily-dressed Indians, and I fancied that they discussed me in Indian dialect. But they did not appear fascinated. For their flirtation was limited always to the original remark:

“Buy my cocoanuts, *señor!*”

VI

Tehuantepec was hot. One was always thirsty. The water supply was of doubtful quality. So I spent most of my time walking home from market with another armful of cocoanuts.

The saleswomen opened them with one deft chop from a huge machete, cleaving off the heavy rind, and leaving just a tiny round hole covered by a thin peeling of the white coco-meat. When one craved a drink, one had only to poke a thumb through the thin white peeling. I consumed cocoanut-milk like a toper, until my room in the adobe hotel was littered with the empty shells.

Little Guadalupe, my fourteen-year-old servant-maid, never removed them. For some reason known to herself, she would pile them neatly around the walls of my chamber, where they looked strangely like the rows of skulls in a catacomb.

Guadalupe was a husky little Indian, rather moon-faced, and very solemn in the presence of guests. There were two other maids of her own age who served us at table, where guests dined with the Spanish proprietor, and his native wife—a Tehuana lady of masculine features and Amazonian proportions. The maids would enter very seriously and sedately with their trays of *frijoles*, but once they were out of sight, we could hear their bare feet scampering across the *patio* as they chased each other to the kitchen in a game of tag.

Sometimes, as I sat in my mud-walled room, writing my notes, little Guadalupe would come and hover about the door, watching me. Then the other two youngsters would sneak up behind her and push her inside, shouting:

“Guadalupe likes the *gringo!*”

Thereupon Guadalupe would exclaim indignantly, “I do not!” and seizing the first available weapon, usually the heavy walking stick that lay upon my table, would chase them over the *patio*, all three looking like tiny plump butterflies as their vividly-colored garments trailed behind them.

Presently Madame would appear from the region of the bar, clad also in colors that shamed the rainbow, her massive bare arms as ponderous as hams, her Jack Dempsey jaw set in firm lines of disapproval. Immediately the three little maids would become as solemn as jurists. Seizing brooms, they

would sweep the *patio* with great vim until Madame withdrew. Then would come the taunt, "Guadalupe likes the *gringo!*" and the chase recommenced.

The Spanish proprietor always referred to himself as the head of the household, but Madame's word was law in the establishment. This, in Mexico, was a domestic situation which never could be found outside of the Isthmus. Madame sat usually in a large chair at the bar-room door, from which she could see whatever transpired in Tehuantepec. Like the other Tehuana ladies, she carried her weight with impressive dignity. She was grand and majestic. Beneath her, the plain little wooden seat became a royal throne. From it she issued orders to husband and servants with regal authority, and even to the passers-by on the street outside.

One day an epileptic threw a fit on the cobbled roadway. Madame sat there in calm unconcern. She was not lacking in pity; she was merely waiting for a pedestrian to pass, in order that she might give directions for the relief of the unfortunate fit-thrower. When one did pass, she called out:

"Pick up that fellow and lay him in the sand where he'll be more comfortable!"

The pedestrian, a slouching little male person, jumped with alacrity to obey the command. The epileptic had just been placed on softer ground and was throwing his fit in comfort, when the daily circus parade came around the corner. Its display con-

sisted of a wheezy band, a horse, a monkey, and one performer.

“Step over that fellow!” called Madame.

And the parade stepped carefully over the recumbent figure.

“A very fine woman!” commented the Spanish proprietor to me in a moment of confidence. “An asset and an adornment to any hostelry! But there are times, *señor*, when she does not comport herself with the dignity befitting an inn-keeper’s wife. She feels the call of her Tehuana blood—the manifestation of that strange energy which one finds among these women. Then she slips away from the hotel. She picks a few cocoanuts, and sneaks down to the market to sell them! *Carramba!* What idiocy! But you can not stop her! It is the nature of these people!”

VII

The more I saw of the Tehuana women, the more I marveled.

Writers had overrated their beauty, but not their character. Beside them, the girls of Spanish ancestry appeared doll-like. The *señoritas* were pretty, sweet, shy, modest creatures, but devoid of personality. These Indian maidens had never been sheltered behind moorish walls; from infancy they had faced the world, and met their own problems;

they had developed character, and their faces were clean-cut, with individuality in every feature. The *señoritas*, accustomed to no exercise more violent than a leisurely stroll in the *plaza*, were frequently stoop-shouldered and walked with a *débutante* slouch. These Indian maidens were as straight as the shortest distance between two points, and their step was the lithe, springy step of the athlete.

They were tremendous workers. They would meet the morning train from Salina Cruz at daybreak; they would haggle in the market throughout the day; they would be back at the railway in the evening to meet the train from the other direction; and thereafter, until midnight, they would sit outside the circus tent, still selling their cocoanuts. Despite their devotion to business, there was always an air of play about their work. They laughed and chattered in their Indian dialect. They joshed one another. They brandished their big machetes in mock anger, and slapped one another with the flat of the blade, each slap against a massive buttocks resulting in a loud "Bam!" that resounded even above the riotous hubbub of the market-place. But let a stranger appear, and all fooling ceased. The welkin rang only with cries of, "Buy my cocoanuts, *señor!*"

Among such self-sufficient creatures, a man felt insignificant. These women owned the town. The shops and most of the houses were feminine property, as were the big coco-groves surrounding the

city. Men were mere appendages in Tehuantepec—a somewhat desirable comfort in a tropical climate—but not at all necessary. The soldiers stationed here looked peculiarly contented, and the older women all wore strings of twenty-dollar gold pieces as mementos of the day when the gold-rush to California led across this Isthmus, yet to the casual observer, these Indian maidens were the least flirtatious to be seen in Mexico. If they could find a man—a fairly permanent, dependable man, who could be counted on to remain at home and keep house—well and good. They did not bother to vamp the passing tourist. They were too much interested in bartering.

Their careers as wage-earners and heads of family had made the older women quite masculine. If they had lost the grace of the younger maidens, they had acquired dignity. They strode along the street with a ponderous aggressiveness, cigars cocked skyward as among Tammany Hall politicians, arms swinging massively as though in readiness to floor for the count any mere male who did not step aside. Many of these older women were followed by troops of servants, ready to carry home purchases from the market. This was a common practice in upper-class circles elsewhere, for no Latin-American aristocrat can ever bear to carry home his own purchases, even if they consist of a single tube of tooth-paste. I was accustomed to the sight, but it was odd to see an Indian woman in the gaudy, picturesque costume of

Tehuantepec marching before a retinue of retainers.

Before I realized that these were the local Hetty Greens, I had the temerity to stop one on the street with a request that she pose for a photograph. It was Sunday, and she had supplemented her already-astonishing regalia with a *huipile grande*—the old head-dress of the Isthmus—an elaborate creation of white lace that rose from her head like a lion's mane and fell to her heels like a peacock's tail.

"Ten cents!" I said, holding up the coin, in an appeal which had proved successful in other regions. "Ten cents if you'll stop for a picture."

She gave me one indignant look. Ten cents to one who owned thirty acres of cocoanut grove, six houses, and a gin mill! She never paused for a moment. She came on, full speed ahead, along the narrow sidewalk, swinging her massive arms. Like the other mere males in Tehuantepec, I stepped hastily aside. These Tehuana women might not be so beautiful as writers had pictured them, but they undoubtedly were the reigning queens of the Tropics.

VIII

Romance was not altogether lacking in Tehuantepec, even for the casual traveler. As I was about to depart, the little hotel proprietor stopped me.

"You really should stay longer, *señor*. In time, I believe you could win Guadalupe, my little servant.

Young men are scarce here, and she has taken quite a fancy to you. These girls do not throw themselves away upon one who flits from flower to flower, as does the tourist. If you were to wait, *quien sabe, señor?* She is small, of course, but eventually she will become a fine big woman, like my own wife."

But I chose to flit. And one couldn't take Guadalupe along. What would a Tehuana lady do if the traveler were to visit a country that grew no coconuts?

CHAPTER XI

THOSE CHRONIC INSURRECTIONS!

I

IT was another long day's journey to the southern border, through a warm sunny country of jungle and blue lagoon.

An air of peace and tranquillity pervaded the land. The engineer, as though infected with the lethargy of the tropics, loafed along from one tiny village to another, stopping at every high-peaked hut of thatch that arose from the low forests of wild cane.

Indians came aboard in merry, chattering groups. They were clad in brilliant rags, invariably tattered to shreds, yet blazing with scarlets and greens, and rivaling the plumage of the parrots and cockatoos that screamed at us from the bamboo thickets. They wore narrow-brimmed straw hats, of Guatemalan type, that seemed diminutive after the immense *sombreros* of central Mexico. Each had a hollow rod of cane slung over the shoulder—the local style of thermos bottle. And each was laden with an armful of infants.

The engineer waited patiently while babies were loaded and unloaded. Some of the Indians, embarking, would clamber aboard and receive the children

passed up by friends through the windows. Others, disembarking, would clamber down and catch the children tossed to them by friends inside the cars. The confusion was astounding. Every one jabbered in a babel of native dialects. But the good humor of the warm countries always prevailed. Every one seemed eventually to find the right infant. And we would loaf onward through the wilderness, among rolling hills red with coffee-berries, past the blue lagoons where schools of tiny fish leaped in silver showers, and wild fowl rose in flocks to skim across the placid waters.

Looking upon the quiet landscape, one would never have suspected that Mexico was on the eve of another chronic insurrection.

II

This railway was a link in the much-discussed Pan-American road, which dreamers hope may some day carry passengers from New York to Buenos Aires in a week. How soon the vision will ever become a reality is problematical. The existing links are few. European merchants, resenting the commercial advantages it would offer to Americans, are uniformly opposed to the project. And native governments, always suspicious of one another, particularly in Central America, fear its military possibilities.

III

Nightfall brought us to Tapachula, a pleasant little city in a rich plantation district.

A diminutive trolley, operated by a Ford engine, awaited us at the station. The motorman climbed out to crank it. The passengers crowded aboard. A host of hotel runners and porters attached themselves to roof, sides, and platform, until the car itself was invisible beneath its coating of humanity.

It rattled away upon wobbly tracks through a low-built plaster city—a city almost overpowering in its scent of coffee from the warehouses and drying floors—and landed us eventually at one of the most picturesque *plazas* in Mexico. It fairly blazed with color. Amid its green were masses of flowering purple bougainvillea. All about it were red-tiled roofs. Above it towered a grove of royal palms, tall and stately, and bursting far aloft into dark olive plumage, through which the façade of the inevitable aged cathedral gleamed white against a flaming tropic sunset.

The streets, bordered by high, narrow sidewalks, were rudely cobbled, and sloped to a central gutter. Horsemen with gay ponchos trailing behind them clattered over the rough stones. Long trains of burros plodded beneath sacks of coffee, driven by *peons* in scarlet rags. Tehuana girls, homeward bound from market, passed in their quaint costume, bal-



NO LATIN-AMERICAN VILLAGE IS SO TINY BUT THAT IT HAS A SQUARE DEVOTED TO BARTERING



THE MEXICAN PEON SO LOVES THE EXCITEMENT OF THE MARKET THAT HE REFUSES TO SELL HIS GOODS ELSEWHERE

ancing earthenware jars above their turbaned heads.

Before the *commandancia* which faced the *plaza*, six musicians were playing upon a *marimba*, the sweet-toned Central American xylophone, standing shoulder to shoulder, all tattered and barefoot, playing so swiftly that their sticks were but streaks of light, yet playing with perfect rhythm, with beautiful harmonies, and with a verve that would have delighted the most blasé jazz-lover on Broadway. The horsemen paused to listen. The Tehuana girls lingered at the curb. Army officers in the bright uniforms of peace-time, were strolling through the *plaza*, flirting with the *señoritas*.

Mexico was quiet, and charming, even on the verge of revolution.

IV

The De la Huerta revolt of 1924 was but a comparatively small incident in Mexican history.

It will probably be forgotten by the time this book appears in print. Yet it is fairly typical of such affairs. And it is rather significant of current political tendencies which are likely to continue long into the future.

To understand it, as to understand everything that happens in Mexico to-day, one must glance into the past.

This originally was the land of an empire which combined savagery with civilization. The Aztecs normally were peaceful tillers of the soil, cultivators of flowers, and builders of monuments, yet they could fight courageously upon occasion, and were addicted to human sacrifices. To this empire came a handful of Spanish adventurers bent upon conquest. They were great warriors, these Spaniards, but they conquered mainly through their cleverness in playing one group of Indians against another. During the three centuries of their rule, there was much progress in Mexico—as the world of to-day judges progress, which means the growth of European institutions—but the Spaniard held the Indian in subjection which in many cases became slavery.

Into the soul of the Indian crept a spirit of rebellion. He rose and cast out the Spaniard. He chose his own leaders, usually from the *mestizo* or mixed-breed population, only to discover that they were as ready to exploit him as the Spaniard had been. Blinded by the eloquent promises of one politician after another, he marched in every revolution. The Spaniard had brought to Mexico the political doctrine that a governor is not the servant but the master of his people. Whoever gained office promptly forgot his promises.

To the foreigner, the one bright spot in Mexican history is the reign of the Dictator, Porfirio Diaz. He pacified a disorderly country. He built fifteen

thousand miles of railway, established telegraphic communication throughout the republic, placed Mexico upon a firm financial basis, and raised it to a foremost rank among nations. He gave the Indian prosperity, but failed to educate him; he kept him in subjection as stern as that of the Spaniard. And rival politicians, whispering to the Indian that Diaz had sold his country to the foreign promoter, found him ready for more revolution.

Then recommenced the old story of one president after another. In the blood of each was that strain of the Spanish adventurer who had come to Mexico to reap a fortune at the expense of the native. The first to keep his promises to the Indian was Carranza. Under his new constitution, previously mentioned, the *peon* enjoyed so many rights, and the capitalist so few, that foreigners ceased to invest.

The Indian, theoretically, now owned Mexico. But he was penniless and ignorant, and he didn't know what to do with it. Its riches were the sort that required money and engineering brains. Its varied climes would produce any crop grown elsewhere in the world, but in most regions they required extensive irrigation. Its rugged mountains possessed a vast store of mineral wealth—iron, onyx, opals, topazes, emeralds, jade, marble, mercury, lead, zinc, antimony, asphaltum, coal, copper, silver, and gold—but they needed machinery and transportation. Its eastern sands with their fortune in oil had

already made this the third petroleum-producing country of the world, when only a tenth of the possible fields had been prospected, but they were of no value to the untrained Mexican *peon*. He found himself poorer than ever.

When, in 1920, Obregon raised his revolutionary standard, the Indian turned against Carranza. Obregon proved the most capable president since Diaz. He was adept at compromise. He quickly pacified the country, hanging the smaller bandits, and conciliating the larger bandits (like Villa) with the promise of forgiveness. He pleased the Indian with agrarian reforms, splitting up the larger estates into small land-holdings. He brought back the foreign capitalist with new concessions. Mexico did not become the heaven which Obregon's American propaganda would have had us believe, but it gave much promise.

Its one dark cloud was a rising tide of Bolshevism. Obregon, with all his compromise, still favored the Indian. And the Indian, sensing his new strength, gloried in it. In Vera Cruz, where the new movement was strongest, workmen were striking constantly on trivial excuse or no excuse at all, tenants had formed a habit of hanging out red flags as a sign that they were tired of paying rent, and stevedores were refusing to unload steamers until the principal port of Mexico was so constantly tied up as to depress seriously all Mexican business.

The native landholders and property owners—not to mention many of the foreign promoters—were becoming seriously alarmed at the menace of this Bolshevism. When it became evident that Obregon was favoring as his successor at the 1924 elections a man who favored the Indian even more stoutly than he himself—General Calles—the moneyed interests promptly started a new revolution headed by Adolfo de la Huerta. The significant point about this revolution is that the Indian—or a part of the Indian population—promptly rose to follow the De la Huerta standard, deserting his own shibboleths to die for principles which throughout all earlier Mexican history he had striven to overthrow.

Among the fifteen million people of Mexico, only one million are of pure white ancestry. Six million are full-blooded Indians. Among the other eight million *mestizos* aboriginal strains predominate. With employment and fair treatment the natives are peaceable. But like their Aztec ancestors they are potential fighters. When discontent awakens the old spirit of rebellion first aroused by the Spaniard, they rise blindly to follow some new leader, believing that at last they have discovered a friend, when they have merely discovered another self-seeking politician bent upon their exploitation. When they do find a friend, they are too ignorant to appreciate the fact. They are the ready dupes of ambitious generals.

v

In Tapachula, the insurrection was marked principally by much blowing of bugles on the part of the Obregon garrison.

The civilian population remained unperturbed.

The soldiery hailed the affair as another good excuse for drinking. Possibly their officers had paid them as a first step toward insuring their loyalty in the campaign to follow. They promptly filled the local bar-rooms, and swaggered about the streets with the air of increased importance which comes to a military man in time of war.

As always in Mexico, the martial spirit brought to the surface the anti-foreign sentiment. The *peon*, whatever his opinion of *gringos*, is usually polite, but inspired by thoughts of battle—and a few swigs of rum—he occasionally tells the foreigner what he thinks of him. A fat sergeant, careening wildly by on a little burro, so drunk that he threatened at every lurch to overturn his diminutive mount, reviled my ancestry as he galloped past. A group of soldiers, making merry in a saloon near the *plaza*, set down their bottle of *mescal* to damn all Americans. One of them staggered out with the evident intention of picking a quarrel, but his attention was distracted at the sight of a Tehuana girl lingering at the curb. Seizing her arm, he grinned in an effort

at blandishment. She broke loose with an angry, "Vaya! Run along! Andale!" and hurried down the street, while a policeman on the corner chuckled and twirled his own moustachios. The soldier turned to me again, muttering something about tearing a *gringo's* heart from the breast. He started toward me, wavered unsteadily, collided with a house-wall and collapsed in the gutter.

For a day the soldiery swaggered all over town, but the next morning their generals—now in business-like khaki—rounded them up and marched them to the railway station, where all passenger traffic had ceased and all cars had been commandeered for transport.

They passed beneath my hotel balcony—a motley crew of evil-visaged little fellows, with cartridges glistening from many bandoleers—cheering and singing. Behind them came a nondescript mob of slatternly women, old and young and middle-aged—the *soldaderas*, or camp-followers, who transport the baggage, cook the food, perform whatever other services a soldier may require, and sometimes assist in the actual fighting, occasionally with a rifle, but usually with sticks or stones, wherewith they engage in combat the *soldaderas* of the enemy. Barefoot, bedraggled, unwashed, they were bent under loads of fruit-baskets, blankets, saddle-bags, water-jars, and even live chickens.

A few of the marchers glanced up at my balcony to hurl a last curse at the *gringo*. Then they vanished around the corner, bound northward to the scene of battle. Tapachula resumed its atmosphere of peace, quite as though Mexico were untroubled by one of its chronic insurrections.

VI

One must not assume that a Mexican revolution is a comic-opera affair. The least conspicuous uprising sows something of death, destruction, and a loss of feminine virtue in its wake. But Mexico is large and sparsely populated, and can stage a dozen revolutions at once without disturbance of its general calm.

The De la Huerta revolt raged principally in central Mexico. For a few months the republic was aflame from Vera Cruz to Manzanillo. But Obregon had the best generals. The United States, taking the quickest means to bring about order, allowed him to buy arms denied the revolutionists. The Huertistas, beaten and dispersed, fled southward into the jungles of Tehuantepec, fighting sporadically along the railway I had just traversed, until completely disbanded. American newspaper readers settled back in their easy chairs with the self-congratulatory comment, "There's another revolution over! Those Mexicans must be a cut-throat lot!"

VII

When one travels through Mexico one is amazed to discover that the Mexicans do not appear a cut-throat lot.

The great masses of Indian and semi-Indian population appear quiet, simple, peaceable folk. Now and then, after the *tequila* has flowed freely, some of them may beat their wives or cut their neighbors' throats, but this is not their regular pastime. In fact, most Old-Timers in the country deny that crime is any more frequent there than at home.

Why then, the traveler always asks himself, can these people not elect a president without bloodshed?

One finds the answer by observing their politeness.

This politeness is extremely personal. The man who talked for half an hour to the ticket agent, keeping forty other persons waiting while he asked after all the members of the other man's family, is a case in point. So are the two acquaintances—familiar to every one who has lived in Mexico—who meet upon a narrow sidewalk, embrace demonstratively, and stand there for another half hour, enjoying one another's professions of love and admiration to such an extent that they force all other pedestrians to step out into the gutter.

It is a personal politeness which must be rigidly observed, no matter how much inconvenience it may cause the general public. One finds it everywhere

in Mexican life—and this discussion might be extended to apply to the life of the neighboring countries given to revolution. It permeates business, where salesmanship follows the methods—now comparatively obsolete at home—of concentrating upon favorably impressing the buyer rather than demonstrating the superior merits of one's goods. And when applied to politics, it becomes the good old principle of "What's the constitution among friends?"

Mexican loyalty is an extremely personal loyalty. The Mexican may love his home, and the immediate land upon which he resides, but he has no conception of patriotism. He uses the phrase for oratorical purposes, but the idea is vague. He would rally to his country's flag to fight a foreign invader, but beyond that, he has no devotion to his republic, or to the ideals and principles—whatever they may be—for which Mexico stands. He knows only loyalty to certain leaders. His political parties do not go by the name of Liberal or Conservative, Republican or Democrat, but by the name of the candidate. The Mexican is always an *Obregonista*, or a *Villista* or a *Carranzista* or a *Huertista*.

Once in office, the successful politician practices the spoils system, which is not unknown in our own republic, but which reaches a far higher point of efficiency in Mexico. Into office come all his personal friends. They have spent their money to elect him.

Now they must reimburse themselves. Graft, fairly common in other lands, is an art in these countries. Scarcely a sum of money ever changes hands in the course of government operations without shrinking at least slightly. Political office is the quick, sure road to financial success. No one knows how soon a term may end, wherefore every one makes hay while the sun shines, for to-morrow it may rain bullets. Should one administration reach the end of its term—and Mexico's latest constitution limits a president to one term—the old principle of personal courtesy to a friend continues. The retiring president names his own successor, whose election—since his troops control the polls—he can definitely guarantee.

The Mexican believes in this loyalty to friends. He expects the successful politician to give all the plums to his supporters, regardless of their abilities for the several posts. Not placing a high value upon honesty, except verbally, he takes it for granted that most of them will rob the people. He understands that they are loath to relinquish office. And in his heart, he would condemn the president as disloyal if he did not stuff the ballot boxes in favor of a chosen successor. His indignation is not aroused at such proceedings. He would do the same things himself if he were in power. But if he happens to be a rival politician, without power, and with no prospect of gaining it except by forcibly dislodging the

other fellow, he affects great indignation. He whispers to the *peon* his horror at the prevailing misgovernment. "These villains," he says, "are robbing you!" And he rises in arms, followed by the *peon*, to save Mexico from its unpatriotic despoilers.

As a matter of fact, it is only a comparatively small part of the population that follows. The great bulk of the Mexican people *are* peaceable; they are tired of revolution; they have lost faith in new leaders; they prefer to remain neutral, and to cheer diplomatically for whoever proves the victor. The revolutionary army is recruited like the federal army from the unemployed, from those who have tired of working and hope to obtain political office themselves, from young boys who are thrilled by the prospect of carrying a gun, and from a certain lawless element that welcomes the possibility of loot and rape.

Should the revolution prove abortive, the Government generals quickly suppress it. A few of its leaders are hanged, a few soldiers executed; the rest of the rebels slip away quietly, hide their weapons, and return innocently to their work. Should the revolution prove successful, the Government generals forget their loyalty to the President; they jump quickly to the other side, taking with them their ignorant troops—who are never quite sure whom they are fighting, anyway—and fight valiantly, as always, to save Mexico. The President flees.

The revolutionists hold a banquet at the Palace, where they make flowery speeches about their patriotism. They conduct an election, make one of their number president, and accept his appointments to office. And there they remain, until another revolution throws them out, or until a squabble starts among themselves as to which shall next succeed to the presidency.

The American reading public always condemns the revolutionist. It can not seem to grasp the fact that elections are never honest in Mexico; that whoever controls the polls is the man elected; that Mexico has never had a constitutional president who did not first capture the Palace by force of arms; that revolution consequently is the only course whereby there can be a change of parties. Usually the revolution is justifiable. But invariably it brings to office another man who, like the man at the ticket window, is more considerate of his personal friends than of the general public.

The Mexicans are not a cut-throat lot. They are merely too courteous.

VIII

Yet Mexico always weathers her storms.

Even in revolution, unless one chances to be caught at the particular scene of the disturbance, this land is supremely tranquil.

In Tapachula the only evidence of the turmoil was an ever-lengthening line of brown-faced prisoners sitting crossed-legged on the street before the *comandancia*, picking with their machetes at the rank weeds that grew up among the cobblestones.

As in Hermosillo a moon smiled down over the low flat roofs. The lilting song of the *marimba* echoed hauntingly through the dim streets. And the plaintive notes of a *gendarme's* whistle assured the world that all was well.

CHAPTER XII

UP AND DOWN GUATEMALA

I

FROM Tapachula to the Guatemalan border, there was a train every two or three days, provided traffic warranted so much service.

It took me through a bamboo forest, and dropped me at Suchiate, a straggling village of thatched huts beside a muddy river, where I had my first experience with the formalities attendant upon the crossing of a Central American frontier.

First one had to secure permission from the Mexican authorities to leave their country. In a white-washed shed three leisurely gentlemen in their shirt sleeves were viséing passports. Before they would proceed, one had to obtain stamps, procurable only at another shack, located as always in these countries at the opposite end of town, and reached by trudging through deep sand beneath a broiling sun. And when, after half an hour or more, one returned with the stamps, there were questions:

Why were we leaving Mexico? When? Where were we going? Why? What had we done in Mexico? Why the devil had we come there, anyhow? What was our profession? Married or single? How

many children? Why? Where were they? And how?

And when one had convinced the officials of his respectability, there was another long hike across an endless sunny grass-plain, to a palm-thatched shelter at the river-bank, where other officials ransacked the baggage. A boatman poled the few emigrants across the swirling waters to Guatemala. And the entire proceeding recommenced on the other side.

The Guatemalan officials had no office. They stood in the shade of a pepper tree, flanked on one side by a squad of barefooted soldiers, on the other by an ox-cart, and backed by the town's juvenile population. They pretended very solemnly to read every word in the passports—although one traveler's was in Russian and another's in Syrian. They paused now and then to shake their heads doubtfully and exchange suspicious glances. But at length, when every one had proved his solvency by displaying thirty-five dollars in American currency—Guatemalan bills not being considered sufficient proof of solvency—they passed us all. Baggage was loaded upon the ox-cart, and we started for the custom-house, led by the soldiers, and followed by the juvenile population.

There was another wait of more than an hour while the custom inspector finished his lunch, took his *siesta*, and smoked his cigarette. At last, how-

ever, he made his appearance, scribbled in chalk all over the outside of trunks and suit-cases, filled out several printed reports, and collected from each of us ten Guatemalan dollars—or fourteen cents in American money—and the formalities were concluded.

We were officially admitted to the Republic of Guatemala.

II

From Ayutla, the Guatemalan frontier station, to Guatemala City was another day's ride.

The railway coaches, if possible, were just a trifle more dilapidated than those of Mexico, but the train made better time. The way led through a continuation of the bamboo forests, but it soon rose to the cooler highlands, where volcanic cones towered into the clouds. One or two of the craters were smoking, filling the sky with dense masses of white vapor, and sprinkling the earth with a fine lava dust.

To all Central America, these volcanoes are blessings. Occasionally the attendant earthquakes may shake down a city, but the lava dust enriches the soil, and a good coffee crop provides the wherewithal for reconstruction. The Pacific slopes of Guatemala are exceedingly fertile. Coming from Mexico, where revolution had brought a cessation of work, one noticed the air of prosperity in this little Central American country. The hills everywhere were red

with coffee berries, the plantations were neatly kept, and the *peons* all seemed busy.

They were very small, these Guatemalan Indians, so small that they suggested Liliputians, but remarkably sturdy. They appeared to earn their living principally by carrying bundles. Every woman on the road was galloping along with swift, flat-footed stride, swinging her arms as though paddling her way, balancing on her head a basket of produce or a great cluster of earthenware jars. Every man had a load upon his back, sometimes so much larger than himself that he resembled a tiny ant struggling beneath a huge beetle. He supported his burden with straps over his shoulders, and with a band about his forehead, so that by inclining his neck forward or back, he could shift the weight. These people showed no bulging muscle; theirs was the smooth modeling of the Indian physique that concealed tremendous strength. They seemed never to pause for rest, but trotted untiringly, serving as pack-animals in the more remote regions for fourteen cents a day, and carrying a hundred and fifty pounds for twelve hours or more.

They were the most colorful types to be seen south of Tehuantepec. Each village had its own distinctive costume, particularly among the women. At one station they were wearing short purple jackets that disclosed six inches of bronze stomach. At another they were clad in tight blue skirts, a waist



GUATEMALA'S POPULATION INCLUDES A MILLION PURE-BLOODED ABORIGINES

of print cloth, and a wide sash of blazing scarlet wrapped tightly about the hips. At another they were draped in *serapes* with a design picturing such confusion as might occur if a bolt of lightning were to become entangled in a rainbow.

Guatemala is essentially an Indian republic. Among its 2,250,000 people—who incidentally comprise forty per cent. of the total population of Central America—there are a million of pure aboriginal ancestry. The whites are comparatively scarce. Yet this is the least democratic of the local nations, and the whites dominate it completely. The greater part of the country belongs to a few wealthy landlords, either native or German, and the *peon*, although not mistreated, has little to say about his government. But the *peon* always has employment. And Guatemala is prosperous.

One noticed that the train did not stop long for Indians who wished to board it, as did trains in Mexico. If a wealthy *hacendado* were seen advancing down the road, the conductor waited for him. If two dozen barefoot passengers were at the station, the engineer tooted his whistle peremptorily, paused only for a moment, allowed them to scramble aboard as best they could, and was off again.

After Mexico, this speed was startling. Considering the size of Central-American republics, one feared lest the train overrun the boundary lines and trespass upon the sovereignty of Salvator or Hon-

duras. But it stayed within its own domain, turning eastward, and climbing out of the coffee-covered Pacific slopes to the pine-clad heights of central Guatemala, landing us in the evening at Guatemala City, 4870 feet above the sea.

III

To the American at home, all Central America is a heat-stricken jungle. He invariably greets the returned traveler with, "I'll bet you're glad to get back to God's country!" As a matter of fact, Guatemala City—like Tegucigalpa, in Honduras, and San José in Costa Rica, and some several other cities in all these countries—has a climate which no city in the United States can equal. It is pleasantly warm at mid-day, and delightfully cool at night. The traveler in these parts always pities the American at home, who freezes for six months, and sweats for six months. He never can understand why the poor fellow doesn't let the farm go to seed, and move down to a decent climate.

IV

The Guatemalan capital is a pleasant city, but not handsome.

Built low and massively, it gives one the impression that it is patiently awaiting another earthquake. In its past it has been moved about from

time to time in the hope that it might find a resting place free from nature's assaults, but another tremor always finds it and shakes it to pieces. It was destroyed in 1917 and again in 1918. A writer never dares use the phrase, "The last earthquake," since another is apt to occur before his book reaches print.

At the time of my visit, in 1924, its builders had apparently become discouraged. Many of the buildings were still but a heap of crumbled ruins. The streets were rough, paved with cobbles partially dislodged, and marked with crazy trails which traffic had worn out in years of zigzagging from curb to curb in an effort to find passage. The drivers of the little old cabs worked their way along these streets like sailors tacking through a tortuous channel, and only large automobiles were in evidence, for the smaller variety so popular in Mexico would have shaken passengers to death.

At the main *plaza*, the Cathedral was surrounded by piles of débris. Since Guatemala keeps the church in the same restraint as does Mexico, the Bishop could not afford to rebuild every year or two. The edifice now stood with columns seamed and cracked, with dome and towers completely gone, and with its greenish silver bells protected by improvised board shelters. The interior also presented a patched effect, and a ruined altar was replaced by a less ornate substitute, but business was proceeding as usual.

Guatemala, however, is the largest city in Central America. Its population—estimated as accurately as anything is estimated in these parts—numbers something between a hundred and two hundred thousand. If a trifle crumbled, it is the most complete city hereabouts. There are many shops, several banks, a number of theaters, and a host of excellent hotels. There is local color in abundance, for Indians in picturesque garb walk the streets, lounge in the *plaza*, and congregate in the native market behind the cathedral, quite as primitive as in the rural districts. There is electric light, a system of mail boxes set into the house-walls at every corner, and even a café with an orchestra at every half-block for those who crave modernity.

These cafés are really a distinguishing feature of Guatemala City. Elsewhere in Central America waitresses are usually waiters. Here the waiters are usually waitresses—rather coquettish little *señoritas*, whose smiles are served gratis with every order. The coffee-kings gather there nightly to keep their wealth in circulation, and to bask in the smiles. They drink somewhat immoderately, as in Mexico, and wait patiently to the closing hour, only to learn that the girls' own parents call to take them straight home. But the coffee-kings are ever hopeful. They come back night after night. And the cafés possess a gayety that adds to the city's attractiveness.

Neither revolution, nor earthquake, nor disap-

pointment in love can dampen the good-humor of these countries.

v

By chance, on my first evening in Guatemala City, I was held up by a highwayman.

I was rambling about unaccustomed streets, when a polite little brown gentleman stepped out of a doorway, poked a revolver into my ribs, and said courteously:

“Pardon, *señor*. Please to raise both the hands above the head, and to tell me in which pocket I shall find your watch and your money.”

My watch was one of those cheap things which the traveler always carries for such an emergency. My money formed a large wad, but it was all in Guatemalan currency, and I had my doubts as to whether my assailant would accept it. Back in Tapachula the Guatemalan Consul, having viséd my passport, had refused the moth-eaten bills of his own country, demanding American greenbacks, but finally compromising upon Mexican gold. The highwayman, however, was too polite to refuse.

“I thank you greatly, *señor*,” he said. “Again I beg your pardon, and bid you *adios*.”

Covering me with the revolver, he backed around a corner. When I looked to see where he had gone, he was running furiously down the dark street. He

had taken a hundred and fourteen Guatemalan dollars, or about ninety cents in American coinage.

VI

In any Central American republic, one notices a "homey" quality lacking in the larger territory of Mexico.

In these smaller nations, every one of any prominence knows every one else. The capital is something of a Latinized Main Street. This is more true of the little countries to the south, but Guatemala is not completely an exception. Its provincialism manifests itself particularly in the newspaper, which savors always of the local country weekly, although a flowery verbosity gives it a unique distinction.

In Mexico City, one finds a press quite the equal of the American, with a several-page daily edition that shows an appreciation of news values, and a Sunday edition complete even to rotogravure picture section and comic supplement. In Guatemala City one finds a little four-page sheet, published apparently by some gentleman who desires an organ for the glorification of his friends and the vilification of his enemies.

On its first page is the feature story of a party given last night by the editor's brother-in-law, Don Guilliermo Pan y Queso Escobar, whose palatial

mansion was graced by a felicitous gathering of our most illustrious men and our most charming women, truly representative of the very cream of our distinguished society, and so on with an ever-swelling multitude of flattering adjectives. Beside it is an account of the Commencement Exercises of the local stenographic college—of which the editor's uncle is the principal—an event which seems to have been a complete success, for it was celebrated with an éclat both artistic and educational unsurpassed in the history of our city, and every number of the delightful and uplifting program was greeted by rapturous applause, the audience sitting spellbound as the estimable, virtuous, and pulchritudinous *señoritas* of the student body demonstrated their efficiency by taking down in shorthand, almost word for word, the speech of the director, our sympathetic and greatly admired fellow-countryman, Don Ricardo Cantando y Bailando Chavez, to whom great credit is due for the distinction and finesse with which the entire entertainment, and thus and thus, until the article closes with a list of the persons present, the illustrious and distinguished everybody in the audience who wore shoes.

On the last inside page, hidden among the advertisements, are the brief cablegrams from the rest of the world, announcing the death of Lenine, the invasion by France of the German Ruhr, and such other unimportant events as the destruction of Tokio by

earthquake, the election of a new American president, or a war in Europe.

VII

Guatemala contained a large colony of foreigners. There were many Germans engaged in the coffee business on the Pacific slopes, many Americans from the banana plantations of the Caribbean Coast, a few exiled European noblemen who had come with the remnants of their former fortunes to live as long as possible without working in a country where living was cheap, and several Old-Timers, all with the rank of General, who had fought in the various past revolutions of Central America, and were now resting upon their laurels.

These countries have long been the happy hunting ground of the soldier of fortune, of whom the greatest since William Walker was General Lee Christmas, who died at New Orleans while I was at the scene of his exploits.

Christmas came to Central America as a locomotive engineer. It had been his profession in Mississippi until a wreck, followed by an investigation, brought out the fact that he was color-blind and could not distinguish signals. Central America was less strict about such things in those days. In fact, most of the old-time engineers are said to have driven their trains with a whiskey-flask handy, and

with few worries about such things as signals. Christmas found employment, but he became accidentally entangled in an insurrection, and formed the habit. On one occasion, when he was driving an engine in Guatemala, he is said to have received news of an outbreak in Honduras, and to have left his train with all its freight and passengers standing on the track while he hopped out of the cab-window and hiked overland through the jungles to join the fray. His greatest exploit was that of repulsing an entire army with a machine gun, assisted only by one other *gringo*, a Colonel Guy Maloney, now Superintendent of Police in New Orleans. He drifted from one country to another, wherever a fight seemed most promising, followed by troops that varied in number from two men to fourteen thousand.

“He was a good scout, too,” agreed most of the Old-Timers in Guatemala City. “He’d give you his last cent, if you needed it. He’d have been a millionaire, if he’d saved half the money he got from the governments he helped, but he blew it all in on parties. He’d get drunk with you, or he’d go down the line with you, or he’d fight you—anything to please his friends. He was pretty square, usually, when he held office. When he was Chief of Police up in Tegucigalpa, if his best pals raised the devil, he’d stick them right in jail. And when their term was over, he’d give them a whale of a good party.”

His revolutionary habits finally became so annoying to Washington that his citizenship was canceled. Broken-hearted about it, he came home, assisted the secret service throughout the European War, and was reinstated. When he fell ill from old wounds and fevers contracted in Central American jungles, many Old-Timers cabled offers of assistance, and his old lieutenant, Colonel Guy Maloney, gave him a blood transfusion, but it was too late. When the news of his death reached Central America, more than one president probably heaved a sigh of relief.

Guatemala City was filled with other ex-adventurers, all a little jealous of Christmas' fame, and all inclined to belittle one another. They sat about the hotel lobbies, spinning yarns about "that little affair down in Nicaragua," or "that little scrap up in Honduras," and if I mentioned to one the story of some other, he would snort loudly with derision.

"Don't you believe it! He's a damned wind-bag! Next time he mentions getting that sword stuck through his lung, you just ask him if he remembers the mule that got him up against the corral wall and kicked hell out of him!"

VIII

Guatemala has had its revolutions from time to time, yet its history—as compared with that of its immediate neighbors—has been fairly peaceful.

If it has not had a succession of *good* rulers, it has at least had a succession of *strong* rulers. Its Indians are a docile race, a race much more easily conquered by the Spaniards than were the Indians of Mexico, and much more easily dominated by the white landlords of to-day. And the army, if not impressive when on dress parade, is one of the most dependable armies in Central America.

In recruiting its soldiers, the government resorts to the selective draft. The *Jefe Politico*—the all-powerful local official—visits each coffee planter, and secures a list of the pickers who have picked the least coffee during the past year. These, provided his soldiers can catch them, are enlisted in the army. Once enrolled, the little *peons* are equipped with uniform, not very elaborately or neatly, but sufficiently to distinguish them from civilians. In the Capital, they are also equipped with shoes, not for efficiency but for the sake of appearances. Unaccustomed to footwear, they have to be trained to its use, and nothing is more amusing than the sight of a new battalion thus shod and stumbling awkwardly over the rough streets. They look uncomfortable and self-conscious, and at each halt will pick up their feet and glare at the shoes much as milady's poodle glares at a pink ribbon tied around its tail.

Yet these little Indians, stupid and illiterate, make better soldiers than the more intelligent *mestizos*, or mixed-bloods. They are more susceptible to dis-

cipline. In most of these countries, virtue goes with ignorance, to such an extent that the mixed-bloods are called *ladinos* in Guatemala—a word that originally meant “tricksters.” The little Indians are far more loyal to the president in office than are the *mestizo* soldiers of the neighboring republics, and are less apt to desert the existing government when an insurrection threatens.

Guatemala's several Dictators, also, have been artists at the business of discouraging opposition.

Of them all, Estrada Cabrera stands out head and shoulders above other despots not only of Guatemala but of all Latin America. Until a very few years ago he reigned for term after term, proclaiming himself re-elected when necessary, and quietly murdering any politician who gave the slightest indication of opposing him.

Why he clung to the presidency is a mystery. He was so fearful of assassination that he scarcely ever showed himself outside the palace. He slept usually in a house across the street, reached by a secret passageway. He ate nothing except what his own mother prepared for him. He would have a dozen beds made up each night, and only one or two of his most trusted guardians knew which one he occupied. He seriously handicapped the country's mining interests by placing a ban on the importation of blasting powder, lest it be used to blow him up. On the

one occasion when he attended a public ceremony, a bomb killed his carriage-driver and the horses, barely missing the Dictator himself. Since it was exploded by an electrical device, he thereafter placed a ban on all electric contrivances, and visitors to the country were relieved even of such things as pocket flashlights.

But from his isolation within the palace, he manipulated all the strings of government, and all Guatemala felt his power. He personally blue-penciled every foreign news dispatch that left the country, and sometimes even the personal cablegrams. He maintained an elaborate spy system, with one agent watching another agent, until every man in the republic was under survey. He permitted no public gatherings where people might discuss politics. He forbade the organization of any kind of society, and once suppressed a chess club.

Quite possibly, he believed that these measures were justified. It is affirmed by many that Guatemala made more progress under his rule than at any period of brief presidencies. Certainly he did not follow the course of enriching himself sufficiently in one term to spend the rest of his life in Paris—a course extremely popular among Central-American executives. And many an Old-Timer will say, "The old devil was never so bad as they pictured him."

But those who opposed his will used to die quite

silently and suddenly, and his enemies affirm that Cabrera used poison. One hears strange stories about his political methods:

He is said on one occasion to have decreed the death of an American who had incurred his enmity. To avoid international complications he dispatched a second American to do the dirty work. The second American went to the first, warned him, and advised him to leave the country. Then he returned to inform Cabrera that the other man had escaped. He did not know that a native spy, having followed him, had already reported the meeting. Cabrera smiled. "That is too bad! But you could not help it, so have a cocktail with me, and forget all about it." Three hours later, the American did forget all about it. He dropped dead.

One hesitates to believe all the stories, for Old-Timers love to shock the itinerant journalist. But certain it is that he kept all Guatemala in terror of his authority, until many of the more ignorant believed him gifted with supernatural powers.

In his later days, as in the history of most despots, he lost his grip upon the country. He had made too many enemies. Every one hated him, yet hesitated through fear of spies to be the first to proclaim opposition. But the inevitable revolution finally materialized, and Cabrera fled the capital. He surrendered on condition that his life and property be respected. It is to the credit of the Guate-

malans that they observed their agreement, although lynch-law might have been more justifiable.

One Carlos Herrera, a wealthy landlord, took his place, but he did not relish the job as did Cabrera. After a few months, when some one else started a revolution, he made no objection. It was comparatively bloodless. A few policemen were the only casualties. They had not been informed that a revolution was scheduled, and when they saw the mobs surging up the street, undertook to quell what they considered a disorderly scene. One completely organized government went out overnight, and another completely organized government came in. Shooting was by way of celebration. An American who had an engagement with Herrera the next day went to the palace, and inquired, "Is Herrera in?" and received the answer, "Herrera's out; Orellana's in." Only one man was arrested. He landed in Puerto Barrios, the north coast port, with a cheerful jag, and cabled Herrera, "On arriving in your beautiful country, I hasten to salute you and to wish you a long life and a merry one." The new government arrested him for treason, but released him as soon as he proved his ignorance that a revolution had transpired.

Orellana, who held office at the time of my visit, was a former lieutenant of Cabrera's. He had occupied the seat beside Cabrera when the bomb blew up coachman and horses. There were rumors afloat

that Cabrera's brain still directed the government, but they received little credence. Another story, purely humorous, was that on the night when Orellana overthrew Herrera, the ex-Dictator started to pile all his furniture against the door of his room.

"But, sir," protested a servant, "these are your own friends coming back into power."

"That's why I'm doing this," said Cabrera. "I know those fellows!"

Cabrera's house was a fortress-like structure of unassuming exterior. An old man now, he was still following his life-long policy of retirement from the public gaze, and a guard of soldiers was present to see that he remained in retirement. The family came and went freely, but the ex-Dictator never showed his face. If he had done so, some one might have taken a shot at it. He probably welcomed the guard for its protection.

Orellana, despite his former connection with Cabrera, was proving a more lenient president. Clubs were now thriving, and the people might congregate where they pleased. Poison had been abolished as a function of government. And men might discuss politics without being shot. Few, however, publicly suggested a change of president. With all its comparative liberality, the new régime was ruling with an iron hand characteristic of Guatemalan governments. Shortly before my visit, Orellana had chased home a party of Mexican bolshevik agitators



WHEN ORELLANA STARTED A REVOLUTION, PRESIDENT HERRERA MADE
NO STRENUOUS OBJECTION



THE ONLY CASUALTIES WERE A FEW POLICEMEN WHO MISTOOK THE
REVOLUTION FOR A DISORDERLY DEMONSTRATION

attempting to spread their propaganda among the Indians of his republic. A few years earlier, when his railway employees threatened a strike unless permitted to select their own officials and to discharge all foreigners from the service, the American superintendent had told them to go to Hades, and Orellana had sent them back to work by threatening to draft them all into the army.

These countries always thrive best under a stern dictator. Even under the tyrannical Cabrera, Guatemala enjoyed more prosperity than it would have enjoyed under a rapidly-changing series of get-rich-quick presidents. For a land of illiterate *peons*, a dictatorship, if exercised with justice, is always the most satisfactory form of government, except to politicians out of office.

IX

The two principal products of Central America are coffee and bananas. The Central-American remains in the cool highlands of the Pacific coast, and raises the coffee. To the invading foreigner he cedes the lowlands of the Caribbean for the culture of the bananas.

In Guatemala, it was a day's railway journey from coffee-country to banana-country — first through a stretch of magnificent scenery, of forested mountains, and of rugged gorges spanned by

several of the world's highest railway bridges—then through a tedious expanse of desert, where the woodland gave way to scraggly cactus, and the mountains (although still majestic and piled one atop another until they reached the clouds) were swept by a fitful wind that blew gustily, transferring the sand from the landscape to the eye—and finally down among the swampy, jungle-grown lowlands of the coastal plains, into the empire of the United Fruit Company.

The stucco dwellings of moorish design gradually gave way to wooden shanties, and Guatemalan natives to West Indian blacks. Years ago, before sanitary engineering made the tropics liveable, the inhabitants of this region had retired to the cooler highlands, where snakes and fever were less abundant. To-day the greater part of the East Coast, all the way from Guatemala to Panama, is in the hands of the United Fruit Company or its several minor competitors. Except in Guatemala or Costa Rica, which have rail connection from ocean to ocean, banana-land is closer to New Orleans than to the capital of its own country. It is peopled with a few American or English bosses, and a host of imported negroes. Its prevailing language is English. And it bears more resemblance to Africa than to the Central America of which it is a part.

A young English superintendent met me at Quiriguá, one of the United Fruit Company's plantations,

and conducted me to a cottage with screened verandas, where one might have fancied himself in the Americanized Canal Zone. The camp was neatly laid out, with well-trimmed grass-plots and cement walks lined by rows of yellow croton and red hibiscus and shaded by coco-palms or breadfruit trees. Each superintendent had his own cottage; there was a large hotel for the lesser *gringo* employees; the local hospital was the largest and best-appointed in Central America; everywhere one observed that orderliness and modernity wherewith the Anglo-Saxon is constantly abolishing the local color of all foreign lands.

On all sides of the camp the banana groves extended as far as the eye could follow them, like a rank uncut lawn of brilliant green. Narrow-gage tracks wandered out in all directions through the lanes of trees, and many *gringo* bosses—all clean-cut young fellows, neatly dressed in khaki, who did their bit to destroy the fictional romance of the tropics by shaving each morning and donning a white collar—were spinning along the rails upon motor-cars on their way to work.

Many years ago, one Minor C. Keith, while building a railway in Costa Rica, hit upon the idea of planting bananas along the line in order to provide freight for his own road. When, during a financial panic, he was unable to pay his laborers, he performed the miracle of persuading them to work for

nine months without salary. He and his assistants drained swamps and practically eliminated malaria long before our Canal Zone doctors learned to combat the fever-carrying mosquito. He formed a partnership with one Andrew W. Preston, the first man to transport bananas in any quantity to the United States, and out of that combination grew the United Fruit Company, which to-day has plantations in Jamaica, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and British Honduras, and controls the banana industry of the world. It owns railways throughout Central America, and operates its own line of ships. It is said to make and unmake governments, although no one ever proves the accusation. It escapes prosecution in American courts as a monopoly because its properties are mostly located in foreign countries. But it has developed a large section of jungle-land that once was considered worthless and uninhabitable; the money it pays in taxes for its concessions is the mainstay of more than one Central-American nation's finances; and it supplies the world with bananas on a policy of "small profits on a tremendous scale."

Guatemala is one of its smallest production sources, and Quiriguá is one of its smallest Guatemalan plantations, yet I spent an entire day riding through the banana groves on a motor-car with a superintendent, and saw but a small part of them.

"The banana's the easiest thing on earth to grow,"

explained my guide, as the little car hummed over the endless tracks. "You just select the right land—the silt of some river bottom—and burn off the jungle. Then you plant them—using the suckers, or bulbs that spring up around an old tree—set them out in rows. And there's nothing more to do except keep them clear of brush. In eight months you've got bananas. The main problem is to pick them just green enough so they'll ripen by the time they reach the States—a little bit greener for England—and get them there when the home fruits are not in season."

From time to time we passed a row of laborers' shacks. Some of the Jamaicans had brought their own kinky-haired women with them. Others had found Guatemalan girls. A host of picaninnies were tumbling about each cottage. Now and then one heard the rattle of dice, and a snatch of music from a mouth organ.

"Most of the men are working to-day," said the superintendent. "We pay them by the job, and not by the week. It brings more satisfactory results in a warm climate. They like it, too, because they can work when they please. But this is a boat day, and we've taught them to work on boat days."

Negroes with *machetes* were cutting down the bananas. A banana tree is only a soft, spongy thing, like the stem of a huge lily. A blow of the *machete* would half sever the trunk, and the tree

would bend, bringing the bunch of fruit within reach. The negroes would hack away the leaves, and remove the banana stalk carefully.

“When you cut down the tree, a lot of new ones grow up around it. Most people don’t know that. They tell about a new superintendent here that got all excited because the men were chopping down the grove. And we always kid new men by sending them for a ladder on their first boat day.”

One bruised banana will rot, and contaminate an entire ship load, wherefore they were handled with great care. They were piled along the track on a prepared bed of leaves. When the pick-up train passed, other negroes shouldered each bunch gently. They might toss it aboard, but other negroes caught it by each stem, without touching the fruit, and laid it upon another bed of leaves.

“We shipped out three and a half million bunches last year—and when we say ‘bunch’ we mean the whole ‘bunch’ and not just a ‘hand’ with a dozen bananas on it,” explained the superintendent. “No, that popular song that everybody sang at home was never heard down here. We’d have killed anybody that dared to sing it. You should have been here one day last week, just to see how sore everybody was when the cook had the nerve to offer us sliced bananas for breakfast. Nobody’d eat them.”

x

Every visitor to Guatemala makes the trip to Quiriguá, not to see the plantation, but to observe the famous Maya ruins hidden in the neighboring jungles.

Like most famous sights which every one travels far to see, they prove extremely disappointing. Their only beauty is that one has to ride horseback through a swamp to reach them, and that they are so completely surrounded with tropical forest, which forms an ideal setting. The ruins themselves, although interesting, are not impressive. There are some four straight columns about thirty feet high, covered with intricate carving somewhat obscured by mildew and moss. Each visiting archeologist scrapes off the fungus in order to obtain a clearer view of the carving, and with it scrapes off part of the carving. Near the columns are a few other queer rocks, fantastically cut to represent a frog or a turtle or some other creature, whose significance no one has been able to explain.

These are the work of the Mayas, who peopled Yucatan and southern Mexico while the Aztecs occupied the Mexican tableland. While the earlier people of the north built pyramids, these people built temples and monuments of lesser stature, but with more elaborate ornamentation. They possessed a system of hieroglyphics which have never been de-

ciphered. Supposedly, the ruins of Quiriguá were erected to commemorate events in local history, but they are small, as ruins go, and lack imposing grandeur. Few ruins in the world can equal the marvelously-carved Maya ruins of Yucatan, but these of Quiriguá fail to astound the observer. Near them, however, has recently been unearthed a fortress upon a hill-top, a very rude fortress of small stones, and scientists believe that marvelous discoveries may yet be made by excavation—possibly of a great Maya City buried long ago by the rotting jungles.

Guatemala has only very recently taken an interest in her past. In the capital I had met a Dr. T. T. Waterman, now the official archeologist of the Guatemalan government, who had just brought to light on the Pacific Coast some ancient carvings more impressive to me than those of Quiriguá.

“I wouldn’t say I discovered them,” he explained, as he showed me photographs of statuary wherein faces and figures were not the fantastic work usually performed by primitive artists, but extremely real and life-like—altogether quite the best sculpture that I had seen in these countries.

“In fact, I didn’t discover them,” Dr. Waterman continued. “Ex-president Herrera did. They were on his coffee finca at Pantaleon. They happened to be on good farming land, so he dumped them all on his rubbish heap. That’s where I found them.”

When the bosses at Quiriguá heard this story, they looked at their own monuments—which tourists came miles to see—and shook their heads sadly.

“Those damned things are on our best banana land, too.”

XI

On the train that carried me back from Quiriguá—through swamp, and desert and mountain—from banana-land to coffee-country—I met an Old-Timer. He had been so long in the tropics that the mosquitoes refused to bite him. Like many another, he had the rank of General, earned in some long-past revolution.

“These countries are changing,” he said regretfully. “I can remember the time when there was nothing down here but thatched huts. All the white men in those days were tropical tramps, drifting from one place to another, but they’ve mostly disappeared. This Fruit Company won’t give you a job these days unless you come down on contract, with a white collar around your neck, and a testimonial from your clergyman.

“The tramp’s gone south. And now the soldier of fortune is passing. You no sooner get a revolution started than the United States sends down a gunboat to protect American property. Things are getting so civilized around here, I sometimes think of going home and joining the Ku Klux Klan for a little excitement.”

CHAPTER XIII

IN SUNNY SALVADOR

I

A MULE trail leads overland from Guatemala to Salvador—a rugged, boulder-strewn path that curls along mountain sides, and fords rivers, and scales precipitous cliffs—a road such as only a mule could travel with security and comfort.

I crossed it in an automobile.

The chauffeur—evidently a revolutionist keeping in practice at risking his life—drove out of Guatemala City with myself and another *gringo* passenger, at four in the morning, and raced through the black night with the shrieking claxon characteristic of all Latin-American motor traffic, past the sleeping suburbs and up the heights to the first narrow ledge.

There, while the car still raced at full speed above a sheer drop of several hundred feet, he removed both hands from the wheel to light a cigarette.

This was merely the beginning. A protest from his American passengers would have delighted him, and furnished bar-room anecdotes for the next ten years. Wherefore Shields—a lean lank Yankee

salesman from the Middle West—smiled cheerfully as though he were having the time of his life, and I followed his example.

The trail was not merely narrow, but it squirmed and twisted, following the scalloped contour of the mountainside. The driver took the curves without use of brake. As a matter of fact, he explained later, the brakes did not work. So we sped unchecked around and around the many bends, until, making a particularly abrupt turn, we collided with an ox-cart.

This stopped us with a crash. The ox-cart overturned. A load of melons, bound for the Guatemalan market, rolled down the slopes, starting a small landslide. The oxen, bumped off the road, pawed frantically for a foothold on the brush-grown decline. The *peon* marketer glowered in sullen resentment. Our chauffeur lighted another cigarette, climbed out to survey his twisted fender and his awry lamps, produced a flask of cognac and took a comforting swig, climbed back again to discover that his car would still run, and drove away as fast as before.

The road grew steadily worse. Our seat-springs were in the same condition as the brakes. This scarcely mattered, since we so seldom touched them, but spent most of the journey somewhere midway between the seat and the awning, contriving as a rule to miss the steel framework of the top, but

clinging to the sides lest we puncture the canvas above us.

Our most difficult task was to maintain a cheerful, dignified expression of countenance for the benefit of observers along the road. Dawn brought the entire population out to see us. Barefooted *peons*—men, women, and children—came racing across the fields at the shriek of our claxon, to obtain a closer view. It was now three years since the first automobile had crossed this trail—an achievement hailed at the time by marveling editorials in the local Central-American press—and motor traffic was becoming a fairly regular thing, but not so regular that the novelty had diminished. In fact, the chickens of the region had not yet learned to jump across the road in front of the car. The other species of livestock were more apt, however, in acquiring the customs of civilization. The dogs chased us with outraged yelps. The cows, always lying in the center of the road, lurched to their feet directly in our path. Horses and donkeys, convinced that we were after them and were as apt to catch them in the woods as on the trail, stuck to the trail, and galloped ahead of us for mile after mile without turning aside, while their indignant owners trotted behind us, hurling imprecations, and describing us as cattle-rustlers.

Boys, and occasionally grown men, took delight in standing loutishly in the center of the street at each village, making faces at us to amuse their ad-

miring friends, and leaping aside at our approach. If we stopped at one of the infrequent towns, as we usually did—in order that the chauffeur might again produce his cognac flask—the whole population surrounded us to stare. On such occasions Shields would reach out and remove five-cent pieces from the ears of the natives within reach of his arm—a diversion practiced with much amusement by Richard Harding Davis on his travels in Central America—with the result that the local police were frequently called upon for the return of the money discovered in local ears.

These policemen took our names at each stopping place—a custom in vogue throughout both Guatemala and Salvador whenever strangers make their appearance—but they allowed us to inscribe our own nomenclature, wherefore, should any list of distinguished tourists ever be published in these countries, the public will be amazed at the many world-famous notables who have made the overland journey. The policemen, unable to read, always bowed profoundly, and if we inquired of them where gasoline might be purchased, they would hop upon the running-board, and show us the way, bowing again for a two-cent tip.

The road, having scaled the first mountain range, crossed a wide plateau. This was a cattle country. From time to time a cloud of dust appeared before us, indicating another drove of steers, and the chauffeur

feur headed always for the exact center of it, sometimes plowing through without missing a steer, but usually dispersing the herd in all directions, whereupon native cowpunchers waved their arms and screamed curses and rode frantically away to round up their galloping protégés.

Having crossed the plateau, we came upon the worst roads of all. The chauffeur gave his wheel a twist, and we started up a river-bed, where a frothing stream tumbled down over a succession of huge boulders. No one but a Latin-American, fortified with cognac, could have driven a car up those rapids. The water sprinkled us, and blinded us. But up we went, the auto climbing from rock to rock, much as a man might pull himself hand over hand up a steep embankment. One wheel would catch; down would jolt the other three wheels; the motor would roar; another wheel would catch; another roar; a lurch that made the teeth chatter; another roar; a few feet of progress; a few feet of sliding backward—

Somehow, we made it. Leaving Guatemala behind, we raced through Salvador, around another series of cliffs where the chauffeur kept looking backward to see whether we flinched, and at last down into the valleys of another fertile coffee country, just as night descended, and the askewness of our damaged lamps made driving still more difficult.

Long trains of ox-carts, returning from the Salvadorean markets, loomed out of the blackness before us. But still we charged ahead, missing most of them, and arrived at eight o'clock—still breathing, though very much bruised—in Santa Ana, the second city of the republic.

II

Salvador is the smallest nation in Central America, but with the exception of Costa Rica the most progressive.

The railway train which carried me to the capital the next day was neat and clean, and the coaches freshly painted by an artist who had covered the interior with bright colors, and had traced designs of lilies and tulips wherever there was sufficient woodwork to permit of ornamentation.

As in Guatemala, the way led through a land of volcanos, wherewith Salvador is so abundantly supplied that for some years she did not bother to construct lighthouses on her coast. At a distance, from the railway train, one could count several of them, some in mild eruption. For miles we rode through a congealed river of metal, a great stream that traced its way downward through the green of Mount San Salvador—a tumbled river of black rock that had hardened into fantastic shapes while still

foaming and boiling. But already it had decomposed in places, and islands of green jungle were appearing along its surface.

Salvador, like Guatemala, is mainly a coffee country. It is not, however, a country of large estates, but of small holdings. Patches of farm-land cover every available space. This is the most thickly populated republic not only in Central America but in the entire hemisphere. Into its 7,225 square miles were packed some 1,500,000 people. As everywhere, over-crowding, by intensifying the struggle for existence, had developed among the Salvadoreans an energy and industry greater than that of their neighbors. Hillsides that would have gone to waste in Guatemala were plowed here to the very summit. Villages, ruined by the last volcanic eruption, were springing up in all the valleys.

One looked upon the heavily populated landscape and wondered why some of the natives did not gravitate over into the next republic. But the people of all these nations are like those of the Balkans in their hatred of one another. When I mentioned the subject to a Salvadorean who shared my seat, he muttered:

“Go to Guatemala? Never! People there are scoundrels!”

Which reminded me that Guatemalans had already warned me against the Salvadoreans, all of whom were said to be cut-throats and purse-snatch-



THE ABUNDANT CENTRAL AMERICAN VOLCANOES FERTILIZE THE COFFEE
FINCAS WITH LAVA DUST



OCCASIONALLY THE RESULTANT EARTHQUAKES KNOCK DOWN A CITY
OR DESTROY THE GUATEMALAN CATHEDRAL

ers. It is this spirit of mutual distrust that has kept Central America divided into five diminutive states. There has been talk of union ever since they first gained independence from Spain and Mexico back in 1821 and 1823, but it has resulted only in a series of temporary combinations of two or three republics, opposed by the other three or two, and brought to an end through internal bickerings. Politicians in all the countries favor the present multiplicity of offices. Wherefore each little nation staggers under the burden of supporting a president, and a congress, and a complete diplomatic corps, although the whole five could be lost in Texas.

Salvador, the smallest, is so tiny that from its center one could sometimes look westward to the Pacific Ocean, and eastward to the mountains of Honduras.

III

If Salvador sometimes indulges in what the people of larger nations describe as "comic opera," it is normally peaceful.

It appeared so tranquil at the time of my visit that I was surprised to learn of its being under martial law.

"Oh, that's easily explained," said the gentleman who shared my seat. "Our president, Alfonso Quiñonez Molina, is a very excellent man, but he has his

enemies. Under martial law, he can draft any one into the army. As soon as an opponent criticizes him, he makes him a General. Thus the critic becomes susceptible to military discipline, and ventures no further criticism."

IV

A few hours of leisurely travel brought me to San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador.

It was a warm, sunny capital, only a trifle over two thousand feet in altitude, extremely low for a Central American city. Its population numbered only some fifty or sixty thousand. Its people, being of *mestizo* composition, did not affect the barbaric raiment of the Guatemalan Indians. The half-breed maidens wrapped themselves in filmy shawls of pink or blue, but after the blazing *serapes* of the previous country these garments seemed colorless. The city itself was somewhat drab. A few of its structures were of the heavy masonry found elsewhere in Central America, and its Governmental Palace was imposing in its wealth of marble columns, yet the city as a whole—being another favorite objective of the local earthquakes—was constructed mainly of wood and corrugated iron, even to the cathedral, which, although painted to suggest stone, was convincing only at a distance.

But it was a decidedly pleasant city, with many

parks and tinkling fountains. Pretty *señoritas* were abundant. Priests in black robes—unrestricted by law in this country—were to be seen everywhere. Men walked through the market-places ringing dinner bells, and carrying little boxes containing a tiny image of the Virgin, to Whom one might bow for a penny. Horse cars rattled through the streets with much crackling of the drivers' whips. There was music each night in the *plaza*, and flirtation beneath the palm trees. The tropic air was balmy and soothing. About the whole city there was an atmosphere of contentment—and a touch of that fictional romance which the traveler craves.

v

Deciding to stay for a while, I took lodgings at a cheap hotel opposite the Presidential Palace.

In all of these countries the homes of the wealthy and influential citizens—even of the president—are quite apt to be located between business offices, or stores, or even among slums. Because of the local habit which wealth frequently manifests of shrinking into concealment behind a plain exterior, the magnificent homes are apt to be no more striking in outward appearance than their inglorious surroundings. The palace, a plain one-story building, was recognizable as such only from the large guard of colonels and generals who lined its sidewalk, and

from the presence just across the way of the principal military barracks, with protruding towers from which machine-guns could sweep the surrounding streets in case of insurrection.

My room had doors opening directly upon the avenue. If I chanced to open them in the evening, I caught a flash of eyes from one feminine stroller after another, for this region despite its distinction was a favorite haunt of street-walkers, somewhat numerous in Salvador as a result of a preponderance of females, a tropical climate, and the difficulty of earning a living which always accompanies an excess of population. From the opposite sidewalk, the colonels and generals would smile and twirl their moustachios, and the policeman on the corner would offer advice:

“That’s a good one! I know her myself!”

For variety, there was an occasional religious procession—the *pase de la virgin*. At certain times in the year, the priests at the many churches would send out the image of the Virgin to make a tour of the city, spending a night at the home of each parishioner who chose to receive Her. Every evening a long parade of women would pass my hotel, marching very slowly, each holding aloft a lighted candle, and chanting in a shrill strained voice.

One night, out of curiosity, I followed them. It was strangely impressive—the winding procession of solemn women, intent upon the image before

them, singing a weird hymn that rose and fell and echoed through the silent streets—the candles flaming aloft, as though this were all a great stream of fire creeping very slowly through the heart of the city. The family that was to receive the image came to meet us, also bearing candles, and led us to the house, where in one corner of the parlor a great stage had been constructed and decked with palms. The head of the family, seeing a foreigner in the crowd, hastened to welcome me.

“You honor my household, *señor*. Come early to-morrow night, and I shall let *you* carry the Virgin.”

They bore Her reverently into the house, and placed Her upon the improvised Altar. For several minutes, they stood before Her, and the chant reverberated through the room, vastly impressive. Then, as though to shatter the whole effect, some woman shrieked in a loud voice:

“Who’s the cause of such great joy and happiness?”

From the crowd the answer came in a mighty roar, profanely like a college yell:

“The Virgin Mary!”

They trooped noisily into the street. All was over. The solemnity was gone. As I came out, several of the girls, so intent before upon their hymn, favored me with a flash of eyes. I recognized them as those who regularly passed my hotel door.

VI

The Central American, like the Mexican, is both an idealist and a materialist. He sees no inconsistency in being both devoutly religious and frankly immoral.

He is quite apt to use the name of his favorite saint as a fitting title for his gin-mill. He employs it as a harmless ejaculation. He may even resort to it for emphasis, as in the case of an advertisement I recall, which endorsed a Charlie Chaplin moving picture with the phrases: "Is it funny? Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!" And, among the lower classes, he is quite apt to regard any religious holiday as a fitting excuse for over-indulgence in liquor.

It is frequently charged throughout these countries that the great waves of illegitimacy follow the principal church processions, which fact is not a reflection upon the church, but upon the inability of the *peons* to associate the ideas of religion and personal behavior. In fact, the common people see nothing essentially wrong, or even unusual, in illegitimacy itself. In Nicaragua, the newspapers in publishing a list of births, distinguish each new citizen with the candid "legitimo" or "ilegitimo," and the latter outnumber the former by two or three to one, a ratio which holds good for all these countries.

It must not be assumed from these statements, however, that all Central America is a hotbed of

immorality. In discussing any moral question, a writer must indicate which social class he has in mind. In any of these countries there is a distinct division between the aristocrat and the *peon*.

In aristocratic circles, a man has every privilege, and a woman none. It is assumed, in Latin fashion, that boys will be boys. Lest girls be girls, their virtue is assured by a close chaperonage. A man of wealth may keep several establishments in town beside his regular home, if bound upon a journey, he may take with him some other lady in order that his wife may be spared the discomforts of travel. The wife remains a model of propriety. Here prevails the double standard.

In *peon* circles, both sexes share something more of equality. They mate usually without the formality of marriage. Should they prefer to change partners from time to time, they do it casually, yet this is the exception rather than the rule. In some cases, a woman objects to any ceremony, preferring to remain free of ties, so that in case her new spouse proves a drunkard or a wife-beater, she can leave him, for there is no divorce in most of these countries. In some cases, they would prefer the marriage ritual, but can not afford it. And in most cases, although free to change partners, they remain faithful throughout life. Women in this class, so long as they have a consort, are apt to be as loyal as the women of the upper classes.

Illegitimate children, consequently, are more a result of these informal unions than of a general promiscuity.

Yet promiscuity is not unknown. The *peon* girl without a partner is the daughter of a rather sensuous race, and of a race that is not inclined to work when an easier living is to be obtained. In this land of tolerance, little stigma attaches itself to her or to her children if she takes up prostitution as a career. In most Latin-American countries, she is restricted to a certain segregated district, but she is recognized by the police as a legal and useful member of the community. The *gente decente*, or decent people, as the aristocrats describe themselves, may not invite her to their homes, but the gentlemen may sometimes call at hers.

If, in San Salvador, she chooses to ply her trade before the presidential palace, what matters it? She does not molest the president. And if she chooses also to join a religious procession, and return immediately to her profession, the Central American sees nothing inconsistent therein. What has religion to do with one's personal affairs?

VII

These people, of whatever class, are naturally tolerant toward one another.

A man may be strictly moral, and many of them

are, even in aristocratic circles, yet he never takes it upon himself to enforce a similar morality on his neighbor. There are no organizations in Mexico or Central America for minding other people's business. The only society engaged in uplifting the fellow of different viewpoint in these parts is one with offices at Albany, New York, which sends out propaganda to combat the evil of bull-fighting.

Whether one wishes to raise the devil or not, one has a comfortable sense of liberty here which is lacking in Anglo-Saxon lands. If one chooses to drink, and to become disgracefully drunk, to such an extent that we at home would remark the next day, "You certainly were a mess last night!", there is no such comment forthcoming from a Latin American. Like the little General at Culiacán, the native of any of these countries will say, "You were very lively last evening."

Perhaps the wife of his hotel proprietor will even compliment him. "After sixteen *copitas* of Scotch whiskey, you did not molest a single one of my servant-girls," she will say. "You have a remarkably fine character, *señor!*"

And he sobers up, feeling that he has been a paragon of virtue.

VIII

If these people seldom criticize harshly, however, they are very fond of gossip. The women especially

have few interests to discuss, and infinite leisure for the discussion.

There were some fifteen *señoras* and *señoritas* at my hotel in San Salvador, the wives or daughters of guests, all of them built to resist earthquake, who spent the entire day sitting in a chair upon the *patio veranda*, without amusement or occupation. Anglo-Saxon girls, with nothing to do except to wait for a husband to come home from work, would have gone insane, but these of Salvador were passively content. None of them ever read anything; in fact only a very few people of either sex ever seem to read anything in these countries; few of them ever sewed or knitted; all of them were quite satisfied with their peaceful existence.

During the absence of their husbands, they were extremely circumspect. When spouses were present, they might greet me with a pleasant, "Good morning." When alone, they affected not to see me. Since the Latin-American gentleman, unless patently snubbed, fancies always that a lady must be encouraging amorous advances, they had learned to be extremely cautious.

But they all had a great curiosity about the United States—which newspapers had taught them to regard as a country whose population spent most of its time in a divorce court—and they were eager to ask me questions. Wherefore they would gather in a body, and reassured by the security of numbers,

would occasionally surround me for purposes of conversation.

Since the feminine mind runs mainly to romance, their questions were rather personal. The women here always wish to know whether the man they meet is married or single, and if single, whether he has a sweetheart. On the theory that the lack of a sweetheart would interest them most, I had always answered questions in the negative, but in San Salvador I discovered that by inventing one I merely interested them the more. The news spread rapidly, and within two minutes every woman in the hotel was present to ask further questions about her.

“Is she beautiful?”

“No, she’s about as ugly as they make them.”

That provoked much discussion. These strange *gringos* did not care for beauty! Had one not seen many an American bringing with him a wife that no Latin would have wed?

“But what does she look like? Six feet tall! *Dios!* And wears number ten shoes! *Ay, car-ramba!* Do you really love her?”

Night after night they asked questions about her, until I regretted her invention. If friends or relatives came to see my inquisitors, the entire story had to be repeated again. I finally decided to let her marry another. But this merely invited further inquiries.

“Are you not disconsolate? No! *Ay*, what un-

feeling creatures are the Americans! And she married a man of ninety years for his millions! How commercial the *gringos!*”

Sympathy and comfort were offered in abundance. Each of the ladies seemed to have a friend or relative who was suggested as a substitute. I was forced to decline the suggestions.

“We are merely waiting, my sweetheart and I, until the old millionaire dies. Then we shall inherit his wealth, and live happily ever after.”

There was a moment of shocked silence. Some one suggested that I was joking, but was immediately overruled by the others. This, they insisted, was a common practice in the United States. Anything was possible among Americans! And was I not even jealous that I must wait while my beloved lived with another?

“Not at all. I’ve cabled a second girl, and she’ll be my wife until the first one is free. We do that regularly.”

My love affairs became the sensation of the community. And the story did not reach the breaking point until the first girl, in the furor of her love for me, announced in an imaginary cable that she had poisoned her husband, and that the millions were ours. Even then, there were several doubtful inquiries as to whether I really meant it. And when I confessed that the whole story was fictitious, they were vastly disappointed. It was all so in keeping

with their visions of the United States that they wished to believe it.

IX

In all of these women one observed a strangely child-like quality.

When better conversational subjects were exhausted, several of them requested that I guess their ages. Oddly enough, in this land where frankness is seldom encountered, women make no effort to hide the number of their years. Perhaps it is because their personal vanity, so very manifest in younger girls, practically ceases after marriage has been achieved.

One of them I judged to be fifty. To please her I guessed forty. She proved in reality to be thirty-two. They grow old so quickly here. Yet in their manner they retain toward men that air of a child toward a parent. Should a husband see fit to discuss with them any serious subject, they listen in awed admiration to his opinions, exclaiming occasionally, "I see! Ah, I understand!"

It would probably offend the average Latin-American to discover that his spouse knew as much about anything as he did himself. He likes the rôle of the patient mentor. He prefers that his wife be a gentle pet rather than a comrade. I dined one day with a Salvadorean gentleman and his wife;

the lady, who came from one of the leading families, had been educated abroad and had traveled extensively; yet the gentleman, although he conversed quite brilliantly with the men at the table, chattered only playful nonsense to his wife. In consideration of his pride, she artfully concealed the fact that she was his intellectual equal.

Now and then one reads in our newspapers or magazines about the equal suffrage movement in Mexico or the organization of a new women's club in Chile. But such innovations have yet to gain an extensive following. With the same conflict of idealism and materialism that distinguishes Latin-American men, the women may verbally deplore their lack of liberty but are in reality quite satisfied with it. They are of a race which is inclined to follow the easiest course, and the easiest course is to attach themselves to some convenient man and allow him to worry about life's problems. In these pleasant tropical countries no girl of the lower classes escapes maternity; most girls of the middle classes, not being over-critical about whom they marry, can land some one; even in the more particular aristocratic circles the spinster is a rarity. The wife usually has her own way when questions arise about the household or the children. Beyond that she is quite content with complete male dominance. And she is passively happy.

So accustomed are the Latin-Americans to the



IN THESE PLEASANT TROPICAL COUNTRIES NO PEON GIRL
ESCAPES MATERNITY

timid, gently-shrinking type of woman that they usually misunderstand the visiting American girl. When the native gentlemen observe her chatting with masculine acquaintances upon the street in her frankly carefree manner, they leap immediately to the conclusion that she is of the *demi-monde*. And when a *gringo* informs them that her smiles mean nothing, they shake their heads in wonderment.

“*Ay!*” they exclaim. “Your Anglo-Saxon females are so cold! So unsentimental! Altogether sexless!”

They shake their heads again, in pity, reflecting that the poor girl is missing all the most delicious of life’s sensations. But since they are ever hopeful, they linger awhile, to make sure that the *gringo* did not err in stating that her smiles meant nothing.

x

Salvador has the smallest foreign colony of any Central-American country. Since it is entirely a coffee country, and since Central-Americans are essentially coffee planters, it has little need for outsiders.

It judges the *gringo* largely by the occasional deluges of tourists who make the brief automobile journey up from the port of La Libertad during their “Go-from-New-York-to-Frisco-through-the-Panama-Canal” trip. As this is the only

capital hereabouts that can be reached within a couple of hours from the seacoast, they all rush up the mountains to laugh at "one of those ridiculous little countries that O. Henry used to write about!"

One group came up during my sojourn.

They came in five automobiles, pausing at the central *plaza* to exclaim, "So this is Paris!" They looked at the leading hotel—an unimpressive but comfortable establishment—and roared, "There's the Ritz!" They stopped for dinner, and demanded *frijoles*, having learned the name of that dish from Latin-American fiction, and being anxious to tell their friends at home about a real native dinner. They waited with much trepidation, having heard that all native dishes were peppery. And when the waiter brought *frijoles*, they screamed with laughter.

"We tried in every way to explain to that little brown fellow that we wanted a native dinner," each would later tell the people at home, "and what do you think he brought us? Beans! Just think of it! Beans!"

After lunch they rode about town again. The monument in the central *plaza* interested them. The suspender-manufacturer from Buffalo called it "Napoleon crossing the Delaware." Great applause greeted the sally. Thereafter, pleased with his success, the wit rode through town standing up

in the front seat, and shouting through megaphoned hands his descriptions of the other sights.

Old-Timers damned him, as they always damn the tourist.

“He’s the sort,” they said, “that brings us all into disrepute.”

But the natives merely smiled. They were accustomed to this oft-repeated phenomenon. When asked their opinion of the tourists, they merely replied, “All of them seemed very jolly, *señor*.”

XI

The sort of American who brings us all into disrepute is, in reality, a much over-damned specimen. He is a comparative rarity. Most travelers, and most permanent residents in Latin America, go out of their way to show themselves congenial and sympathetic to the natives.

We travel-writers love to picture the gruff, impolite American because he shows the reading public by contrast that we are cultured, considerate persons, with an international breadth of mind that enables us to appreciate foreign countries and foreign customs.

But the offensive fellow-countryman does exist.

“It is not so much that he is a low-class American,” explained a Salvadorean gentleman with un-

usual frankness. "Usually he is one who behaves very decently at home. Here he feels at liberty, in his disrespect for a small country, to do as he pleases. One of your diplomatic representatives a few years ago was expelled from the social club at Tegucigalpa, because when drunk he would go out upon the balcony to whoop and cheer and cast things at the pedestrians below."

Our diplomatic and consular corps has sobered up since the days of O. Henry, and the typical representative of our State Department no longer sits in his hammock with a gin bottle, throwing banana peelings at the parrot. But this incident I was able later to verify. And there was one incident more.

"Not long ago, *señor*, two Americans came over the trail from Guatemala in an automobile, and when asked for their names by our police, they inscribed everything from the Prince of Wales to Jack Johnson. The authorities are tracing them now, and if we catch them, they shall learn what it means to show such insult to El Salvador!"

Salvador was a very pleasant place, but I decided to drift along. Anyhow, news had just arrived that a revolution was threatening in Honduras, the next republic on my itinerary. So I started in haste for Honduras.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REVOLUTION IN HONDURAS

I

I STARTED in haste for Honduras, but haste achieved nothing in these lands.

One of the eccentricities of the average Central-American republic is that the traveler has little difficulty in entering the country, yet having entered, finds his departure balked by countless formalities. Apparently the government is eager to welcome any one, but if it can discover that the visitor is a rapscallion, is determined to add him to the permanent population.

Slipping into Salvador through the back yard, I was not required even to display a passport. On the day preceding my intended departure from the Capital, I learned that I must call upon the Secretary of Foreign Relations, and convince His Excellency of my respectability before I should be permitted to leave.

A pretty *señorita* in the outer office of the State Department ceased powdering her nose to listen to my plea.

“*Cómo no?* Why not, *señor?* If you will kindly return the day after to-morrow—”

She smiled sweetly in dismissal, and having settled the matter in the favorite Latin-American fashion, reopened her vanity case, upon the mirror of which was pasted the photograph of her sweetheart, who seemed even more important than this affair of State. Gringo-like, I persisted.

“How about to-day?”

“Impossible, *señor.* The Secretary is in conference. And the Sub-secretary has gone home.”

“Where does he live?”

“*Quién sabe?* Who knows, *señor?*”

Evidently annoyed at my insistence, she finally discovered a clerk who professed that he did know. He wrote out the address for me: “*Numero—, Calle 10 Poniente.*” It was only the middle of the morning, but it was already fairly hot in San Salvador. I hiked through sun-blached streets, only a few of which were numbered. At length I asked a policeman for directions. He glanced at my perspiring forehead, and assured me that I was now at the Tenth Street *Poniente.*

So I knocked at the proper number, and inquired of a servant whether His Excellency were at home. I learned that he was. A colored gentleman in pajamas rose from a hammock in the *patio*, and shook hands very cordially. Not to be outdone in politeness, I made an elaborate speech, emphasizing my

regret at having to leave his delightful country, and begging that he would do me the favor to grant permission.

“The permission is yours, *señor!*”

“Do I not require your visé on my passport?”

“Not mine, *señor*, but that of the Sub-Secretary of Foreign Relations. I am only an humble employee of the street-cleaning department. But *muchas gracias* for your visit. Always my house is yours, at Numero —, *Seventh Street Poniente.*”

When I did reach the *Tenth Street Poniente*, it was to discover that the address given me at the State Department was wrong. His Excellency lived somewhere else. But at last, after four hours of a house-to-house canvass, I found him. Having obtained the necessary visé, I caught the first train to La Unión, on the Gulf of Fonseca, from which one could look across a strip of blue water and see the hills of Honduras itself.

“How soon can I catch a boat?” I inquired.

The citizens of La Unión shrugged their shoulders.

“Perhaps the day after to-morrow, *señor*, or the day after that. But *quién sabe?* In the meantime you had better visit the local *commandante* to secure permission.”

II

As a matter of fact, the boat did not leave for several days.

La Unión was the usual type of Central-American port town—a colorless, uninteresting little city, with numerous buzzards hopping about its mud-flats, as hot as blazes, and devoid of entertainment.

I was welcomed at a small hotel with an inquiry as to whether I possessed a watch. No one knew the time. But since it was growing dark, the proprietor assumed that it was nearing the hour for supper. A slatternly maid brought out some tableware that had barely survived the last earthquake, and served the usual Central-American meal of beans, rice, beans, chicken, beans, coffee, and more beans.

On the hotel wall a notice proclaimed that this establishment was preferred not only by tourists, but by people of good taste. Its principal attraction seemed to be Berta, its beautiful bar-maid. Berta, although a rather dark-complexioned young person, had a pleasant smile that revealed the whitest of teeth. She took great care of those teeth. At five minute intervals, she rinsed them with a glass of water, and expectorated upon the bar-room floor. The town bachelors spent most of their idle hours—about sixteen each day—whispering sweet nothings to Berta, to which she smiled roguishly but shook her head. Such was her popularity that she had never learned to open a beer bottle. Whenever a patron wished a drink, Berta had only to glance toward the group of idlers, and some energetic young

man would step forward to open the bottle by chewing off the top.

Berta was studying English. She would sit on the counter, with a book before her, reciting: "Wan, too, tree, fo-ur, fivvy, sixxy, ay-it, tenny." The proprietor's wife sat beside her in a large armchair, examining my photographs with untiring interest. She was rather stout, and inclined either to headache or stomach-ache or both. She fanned herself with a palm-leaf fan, and groaned, and exclaimed from time to time, "Ay! What heat it is making today!" She would hold up each photograph, and inquire, "What is this?" The inscription was written on the back of each, but the *Señora* did not read Spanish, much less English. Berta always interpreted for her, with fantastic results: "A tee-pee-cal stritty sinny een Gua-te-ma-la." Then she would smile again, and the scowls of the local swain would suggest that if the boat did not sail pretty soon for Honduras, the village buzzards would have a change of diet.

III

When the launch did leave for Honduras, there was further formality. It was scheduled to depart *a las nueve en punto*—at nine o'clock sharp—with much verbal emphasis on the *sharp*. A squad of Salvadorean soldiers manned the dock, and halted

me at my approach. My baggage was placed in the office, and the door locked, and I was motioned to a bench. Stevedores were loading the diminutive vessel with a set of dilapidated furniture, which did not appear worth transporting from one place to another, but which was being appraised by a pompous official, and duly taxed, while its owner waved his hands and proclaimed that he was being robbed. Official and owner finally adjourned to the governor's residence to settle the dispute, and did not reappear until nearly noon.

Meanwhile the passengers waited. Cargo difficulties having been adjusted, the pompous official called each of us to the office in turn, collected a small fee, and took our names and histories. He then compiled a list, and sent it away to be typewritten for presentation to the *commandante* of police. After another hour or two, the list reappeared, covered with huge red seals, and flowing signatures. There followed next a minute inspection of baggage, which, in other lands, occurs only when one enters the country. My notes aroused suspicion. The inspector examined each page, pretending to read it. Was I carrying away the country's military secrets? The eight barefoot soldiers gathered closer, and glared suspiciously. These secrets were important.

But at last we were permitted to embark, still with formality. The soldiers lined up before the gang-

way. The official read our names from the list, and we embarked one by one, surveyed by the accusing eyes of authority. The captain of the launch took the wheel, and jangled a bell as a signal to the engineer three feet behind him; the engineer jangled another bell to let the captain know he had understood the signal correctly. And we were off for Honduras, visible just across the bay—at some hour of mid-afternoon *en punto*.

IV

It was a brief voyage, through island-dotted waters alive with pelicans and seagulls, to Amapala, the one Honduran port of entry on the Pacific, situated upon a volcanic island.

Another official glanced idly at my passport, and waved aside my baggage without examining it. Several weeks later, when I departed, the same official was to raise as much rumpus as the Salvadorean authorities had raised, but to-day he offered no difficulties. Within a few minutes, we were all back in the launch, chugging toward the mainland, to San Lorenzo, where commenced the automobile road to the Honduran capital.

Arriving too late to catch the daily truck, we settled ourselves for the night. San Lorenzo was merely a ramshackle village of thatched huts in the jungle, a village in keeping with Honduras' reputa-

tion as the most backward country in Central America.

Two Chinamen, however, had opened a neat little hotel there, and were ready for business. And there was entertainment in plenty, for Hop On and Hop Off, co-proprietors of the establishment, were engaged in discharging their native servant. The Honduranean, a big, niggerish-looking fellow with murder in his eye—in both eyes, to be accurate—was objecting to being discharged. He kept slouching from table to table, picking up dishes, and smashing them on the floor. Hop On and Hop Off were going frantic with rage at each new act of vandalism, but neither of them was of heroic stature, wherefore they resorted to strategy rather than force. They had taken shelter behind two doors at opposite ends of the dining room, and would pop out from concealment one at a time to shout curses at their erstwhile employee. No sooner would the Honduranean rush at one with his knife, than the door would slam shut in his face, while the other door opened and the other Hop screamed curses from the opposite wall. Finally, tired with the exertion, the big native accepted his discharge as final, and strolled outside to tell his troubles to the rest of the village, which had assembled to watch the excitement.

They were all ugly-visaged fellows. They lacked the gentle suavity of the neighboring peoples. They

might have been no taller than Size B Irishmen, but after one had dwelt among the Lilliputians of Guatemala, they looked like giants. A taint of negro blood was evident in their features, for Honduras—which has a long strip of coast upon the Caribbean—was in past years a favorite refuge for run-away slaves from the West Indies, and its population to-day is the most heterogeneous in Central America. Little tufts of goat-like whiskers on chin and cheek did not add to their personal beauty. Altogether, this was the least charming race I had yet discovered on my travels.

Having accepted his discharge as final, the servant picked up an ax, and seated himself cross-legged on the ground before the hotel, hoping apparently that the Chinamen might venture outside into the gathering dusk. They continued, however, to revile him from the security of their two heavy doors, until the audience tired and drifted away, whereupon the quarrel seemed to die from lack of interest, and the Honduraneean himself, having tossed the ax away with a gesture of disgust, wandered off down the street.

Supper was finally served on such tableware as remained unbroken. The village prostitute, aged sixteen, then took the center of the stage, and recited for our benefit the story of her life. While unfortunates in most lands prefer not to air their sorrows publicly, those of Latin America find a certain

dramatic pleasure in so doing. For the next two hours the assembled guests heard the tale of her marriage to the handsome Sebastiano, of Sebastiano's sudden death in an earthquake, and of the long succession of gentlemen who had consoled her for Sebastiano's demise. Then some one bought her a drink, and she vanished into the night.

Later, the Honduran returned, this time with a shot-gun. Thereupon the Chinamen bolted their doors, and everybody retired to bed.

v

I was awakened at 4 a.m. by a great pounding upon my door.

Bill, a husky American truck-driver, was going up to Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, and desired company. The business-like Chinese were already on the job with breakfast. We ate it in grouchy early-morning silence, and drove off toward the mountains through an inky-black fog.

"I know every inch of the way," consoled Bill. "There'll be no trouble unless somebody takes a shot at us, or blows up a bridge. They haven't started yet, but they're likely to, any minute. Somebody cut the telegraph wires last night."

From time to time, as we raced through the darkness, stern voices called upon us to halt. From the road ahead a group of hard-faced natives would

emerge into the glare of our searchlights, covering us with rifles. They were the federal soldiers, bare-foot and tattered, with nothing to distinguish them from revolutionists. They examined my passport, ransacked the cargo in search of arms or ammunition, and finally permitted us to continue.

Eventually the sun made its appearance, revealing the most broken of landscapes. The name "Honduras" means depths, and the land is well named. A forty-five degree slope was considered fairly level here. On such grades, the peasants had built their patches of corn-field. Even these patches were infrequent, for the whole tumbled country seemed to go straight up or down. The road itself scaled precipitous heights, and twisted around narrow cliffs, where the least mistake of a chauffeur might send a car tumbling over and over into infinity. It was all ruggedly beautiful, particularly as we climbed into the coolness of six thousand feet above the sea, where the hills were covered with pines, but it was a cruel country—such a country as discourages agriculture and effectually prevents the transportation that might open up its vast store of mineral wealth—a country suited only for warfare and revolution. And from the time of the conquest revolution has been its principal product.

Bill, however, who had lived here for something over a decade, loved both the country and its people.

“They’re all right, if you know how to handle ’em. Take that boy of mine up there on the cargo. Mighty good boy. I got ’im tied up with rope just now. Came in drunk and kinder ugly last night. But he’s comin’ out of it. I’ll buy him a bracer at the next stop, and he’ll be all right. Best boy on the road.”

Bill spoke always with conviction. He finished off each sentence with ejaculations suitable only to the pulpit. Then he spat.

“I wouldn’t go home for a million dollars. Can’t stand the damned sissies back there. Give me roughnecks! I ain’t got much use for them society fellows. I’ve got a brother in Minneapolis. He was a regular guy when we was kids. Could lick anybody in school. But he made a lot of money and married one of them fiddle-ly-diddle-lies, and went all to pieces. I came home to see him two years ago. He met me at the station with a big car, all dressed up in a fur overcoat, and he says, ‘Bill, you’re just in time for luncheon.’ I *looked* at him. I says, ‘I guess you mean lunch, don’t you?’ He took me to a regular mansion. Out came the fiddle-ly-diddle-ly. He says, ‘Mable, may I present my long-lost brother from Honduras?’ Christ! Why couldn’t he say, ‘Bill, meet the old woman’? She holds out her hand, way up in the air, like they do in the movies, and says, ‘Charmed, I’m sure.’ God!”

He gave the wheel a violent twist, and we shot around a mountain cliff. He drove along a narrow

precipice with one wheel almost hanging over the rugged gulch below.

“They took me down to ‘luncheon.’ One of them big English stiffs in a boiled shirt came out and gave us each a little cup of soup and a cracker. I just looked at my brother. ‘Joe,’ I says, ‘ain’t this lime-juicer goin’ to give us nothin’ to eat?’ He says, ‘We’ll have dinner in the evening; you’ll soon get accustomed to it.’ ‘Accustomed hell!’ I says; ‘to-night I’ll be down in a restaurant, gettin’ a regular feed. I’ll be eatin’ corn-beef and cabbage, same as you used to eat. I ain’t sore at you, Joe, I’m disappointed. You was a regular guy before you got them society ideas. But you don’t make a sissy out of me. I’m goin’ straight back to Honduras.’”

He drove along the precipice with savage relish. Presently, as we passed a little native farm in a rugged valley, he called my attention to it.

“That’s where *my* wife comes from. No fiddle-ly-diddle-ly for me. She’s an Indian—pure-blooded Indian—but she’s white—whiter’n you are—and a damned good wife, too. We don’t take luncheon in our house. We eat lunch. *Luncheon!* Christ!”

VI

No one having shot at us from the hills or blown up a bridge, we raced into Tegucigalpa in the early afternoon.

Every one in the Capital was awaiting the revolution, but the city remained unperturbed.

It was an old, weatherbeaten town. A river wandered through it, bordered by high cement walls, and spanned by an aged stone bridge of many arches. The streets were hilly. Sidewalks might be level, but after one had followed them for a certain distance, one was apt to find himself ten feet above the driveway, sometimes able to descend by a flight of steps, but usually forced to jump or retrace his way. The houses were aged and bullet-scarred. If any of them had been constructed within the past forty years, the climate had quickly given it an appearance of venerability.

The central *plaza* was unattractive. There were a few palms and much purple bougainvillea, but they were surrounded by a rickety railing green with mildew, and interspersed with unattractive monuments. The buildings facing the *plaza* were of nondescript architecture. On one side was a yellowed cathedral, with several varieties of weeds sprouting in niches originally intended for images of the saints. On another was a row of arched *portales*, of flimsy wooden structure, housing several courtrooms, a barber shop, a fashionable club, and a number of cheap saloons. On the other two sides were stores.

The most imposing edifice in the city was the Presidential Palace. It stood upon the river bank,



THE WARSHIP ROCHESTER HAD ANCHORED AT AMAPALA ON WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS A COURTESY VISIT



FROM HIS PALACE THE PRESIDENT COULD WATCH THE TREASURY TO SEE THAT NO ONE STOLE THE NATIONAL DEBT

towering above massive ramparts like an ancient feudal castle. From its loop-holed walls machine guns could sweep the old Spanish bridge. And from its windows the president could maintain a watchful eye upon the National Treasury across the street—a dilapidated old building whose contents at the moment consisted principally of a national debt.

Why any one should fight for possession of this city, with its depleted finances, was a mystery later explained.

“The government took in eight million *pesos* last year,” said a well-posted American resident, “and only spent five million, yet it describes itself as penniless, and pays only the soldiers and police, keeping such employees as the school-teachers waiting six months for their salaries. Three million *pesos*, almost half the country’s receipts, have disappeared. That’s why everybody is constantly squabbling for the presidency of the republic. That’s why Tegucigalpa remains the most ramshackle capital in Central America.”

VII

The current political controversy was but a typical incident in the history of Honduras.

The term of President Rafael López Gutiérrez had come to an end. During his two and a half years of office, he had weathered thirty-three insur-

reactions. He was ready to retire. But his fellow politicians, although they had already prospered to the extent of three million pesos, demanded that he follow the Central-American custom of turning over his office to one of their own group, in order that their prosperity might continue. And the President gave his support to his personal friend, Bonilla.

At the elections recently held, there had arisen two other candidates, Carías and Árias. Through some oversight, the President had allowed a few of their supporters to help in the counting of the ballots. As a result, Carías led with fifty thousand votes, Árias following with thirty-five thousand, and Bonilla (the presidential favorite) bringing up the rear with only twenty thousand. And although Carías led, he failed to receive the absolute majority required by the Constitution to insure his election. It therefore devolved upon Congress to choose one of the three. And Congress favored Árias. To sum up the situation, the people preferred one candidate, Congress another, and the President another.

A revolution appeared inevitable. The President had declared martial law. Soldiers were everywhere. One could distinguish them from civilians because they carried rifles, and because when there were two or more of them they marched one behind the other in the center of the street, sometimes in cadence. A few had blue uniforms, a few had khaki; most of them wore whatever garments they hap-

pened to be wearing when drafted. Many were soldiers of fortune from neighboring countries—professional scrappers called in by a President who knew that his people were against him. They would stop me on the street occasionally to ask that I lend them a *peseta*—twenty-five cents—until pay-day, but they impressed me as a doubtful risk.

The city was ablaze with election slogans, scribbled with chalk upon every doorway—"Viva Árias!"—"Viva Carrías!"—"Muerto Bonilla!" Translated into "Live Árias," "Live Carrías," and "Death to Bonilla," they seemed indicative of the earnest nature of Central-American political campaigns. All three candidates were now in the city. Each had a troop of his followers living at his residence for protection. One, who was stopping at the principal hotel, was surrounded by twenty armed gunmen, who sat about the bar-room and the lobby, scanning everybody who entered, and ready to take a precautionary shot at a member of another party. Each had spies watching the others, to see that they did not slip out of town to some assembly-point in the mountains. Some day, one of them would do it. In the meanwhile, the President in office kept a close eye on all three. From time to time a detachment of soldiers would come marching through town, bringing to prison a party of conspirators caught hatching insurrections in the neighboring villages.

The American Minister, Franklin Morales, was holding daily conferences at the Legation, bringing the candidates together in an effort to reach an agreement. Each took turns making speeches about his love of Honduras, his aversion to bloodshed, and his earnest hope that the muddle might be solved peacefully. When asked for a specific suggestion as to the solution, each seemed to think that it could be most satisfactorily achieved by the withdrawal of the other two candidates.

Meanwhile, every one in Tegucigalpa ripped up the boards of his floor, brought out the rifle and ammunition secreted for such an emergency, and waited for the fireworks. And the time-scarred old Capital seemed to be saying to itself: "Another revolution can't do me any harm."

But when I inquired as to just when the fireworks would start, it developed that a revolution was as undependable as transportation facilities had been.

"Who knows, *señor*? Perhaps the day after to-morrow, perhaps the day after than. *Quién sabe?*"

VIII

I settled at a small hotel, where one enjoyed the advantage of intimate association with a native family.

There were only two other guests, but the family

was multitudinous. A young man had fallen in love with the landlady's daughter, and married her, and had brought so many relatives of his own to live at his mother-in-law's expense, that they filled all the rooms, until there was space only for three boarders. Just how they all managed to exist on the trifling income of the establishment was an unfathomable mystery, but they contrived somehow not only to feed and clothe themselves, but also to keep a servant.

She was an anemic little girl in a tattered linen dress. She was always smiling as she raced from one room to another to answer a summons. Everybody seemed to take fiendish delight in calling for her. The cry of, "Petrona! Petrona!" echoed across the *patio* from morning until night. Even the parrot had adopted the slogan, and throughout his waking hours would screech, "Petrona!" And Petrona, always cheerful, obeyed each call.

One of the other guests was a married lady, whose husband had sent her to Tegucigalpa to keep her out of the way of an expected battle elsewhere. With the extreme faithfulness of Latin-American wives, she locked herself in her room, to which Petrona brought her meals. She emerged only to wash baby clothes at the hotel pump, or to scream instructions to her numerous progeny in the *patio*—a noisy little brood of future revolutionists who paid no heed to her many injunctions.

The other guest was a Spaniard, who had just come up from Nicaragua to bring twenty-four prize game-cocks for Sunday's rooster fight. He was a tall, horse-faced, loquacious individual, who talked continuously at the table, mostly in subtle smut. He was an artist at the use of *double entente*, and had raised vulgarity above the level of pure nastiness, so that it was now quite suitable for dinner-table conversation in the presence of ladies. He was a jovial person, predisposed toward the singing of love songs, to which he could wave time with his knife and never spill a bean. If his game-cocks won on Sunday, he was planning to hire an airplane and fly home to Nicaragua. He intended to load it with beautiful women, and sail as close as possible to the romantic tropical moon.

His roosters were tied to stanchions in the *patio*. They were continually glaring at one another, flapping their wings, crowing challenges, and straining at the cords that held each of them by the foot. Whenever the Spaniard ceased his vigilance, one of the married lady's children was certain to unloose a bird, and watch him peck a neighbor to death. But on Saturday the survivors were sent to the arena, packed into individual compartments in a large wooden box, and thereafter the hotel was peaceful. The box disappeared down the street on the shoulders of a *peon*, accidentally inverted, so that the game-cocks stood on their heads—an in-

dignity which should have made them scrapping mad for the morrow.

The revolution not having materialized, I went to the cock-fight. It was held in a back yard, where a rude board shack had been improvised. There was a dirt-floored ring, surrounded by a four-foot wall, and overlooked by a rickety grand-stand and a still more rickety bleachers.

The ring was already thronged with natives, each holding a rooster in his arms, and shoving it at another fellow's rooster in order to provoke the martial spirit. The birds were fluttering, blinking beady eyes at other birds, and clucking loudly to express their irritation. Back against the adobe rampart of the establishment were some forty other prospective contestants, each in an individual cage, crowing noisily as though he would proclaim himself the father of the largest egg ever laid in Honduras.

There was much delay. It seems that the gentlemen in the ring were trying to match their birds, but each desired to pair off his own with one that could be easily licked. There was much argument, much waving of hands, much indignant protest. At length it was settled. A little fat man beside me commenced sawing off the spurs from a rooster's legs, and fitting thereon two sharp curved blades of steel. At the money counter—a rough wooden board presided over by a tall stony-faced man with heavy black eyebrows and the general air of the

professional gambler—there was great excitement. Men crowded about it, shouting, “Two pesos on the red one!” “One peso on the *gallina!*”

The umpire—a well-dressed, impressive-looking individual who had once held office in the Honduran cabinet—inspected the steel gaffs, and the fight commenced. The two owners released their birds, and withdrew. For a moment both cocks eyed one another. Then, in apparent indifference, they turned away, and pecked unconcernedly at the ground, strolling around the ring as though neither saw the other. They walked clumsily, bothered by the long blades they carried. Occasionally they stopped, raised their heads, and crowed. Then they resumed their pecking at the earth, hunting imaginary worms. This, however, was all bluff, designed to throw the adversary off his guard. Quick as a flash one turned and flew at the other. They met in mid-air with a great flurry of feathers. Back they drew, crouching. Then they were at it again, clawing and pecking until the world became saturated with flying rooster.

The spectators went frantic with joy. They screamed applause. They shouted advice at the contestants.

Again the cocks drew back, crouching. A wild yell went up from the stands. I could observe nothing, but these fellows were experts, and they saw the end before it came. For suddenly, without warn-

ing, one of the cocks toppled upon its side, gushing blood from its trembling beak. In a flash the other was upon it, pecking triumphantly at its head. And the crowd poured into the ring.

There were other combats. The intermissions were long, and marked always with much bickering. The fight might end in a minute; the intermission was always at least a half hour. After the roosters were paired there was delay for the fixing of the gaffs, delay for the betting, delay while each owner brought in another cock to peck his fighter into the proper rage. But these people could tolerate any delay, especially if it were in the interests of the national sport. When two cocks did not appear eager to slaughter themselves to make a Honduran holiday, the wrathful spectators hurled abuse at them.

“Cowards! You are worse than hens! *Car-ramba!*”

But there was only one such pair. The others were game. They might strut about interminably in their effort to secure an advantage, but once they clashed, they fought to the death. Sometimes it came unexpectedly, with one quick blow of the knife. Usually one of the birds sank weakly on a severed leg, yet rigged valiantly toward the other, only to be pecked again and again until the whole back of its neck was a ghastly wound. And two of the contestants—big strong birds, with glorious plumage of

many shades, and equipped with long, powerful legs—hurled themselves at each other the moment they were released. They met with a crash, and tumbled over and over, clawing and biting, and rolling the length of the arena in an indistinguishable mess of feathered warrior. The crowd was upon its feet. Men screamed with joy. And after it was all over they hugged one another.

The little fat man turned to me:

“How do you like it? *Muy bonita, verdad?* Very nice, what?”

“Awfully nice.”

“There will be others. We shall fight until dark.”

But I strolled back to the comparative quiet of the hotel. The Spaniard's birds had all been defeated, wherefore he was going home by the usual means of travel.

IX

A week passed, and nothing happened.

Rumors flew thick and fast, however. Every one discussed the forthcoming revolution as a certainty. Now and then a *peon* would drop casually into the hotel to inquire in whispers whether the guests had any ammunition to sell. He never used the word “ammunition,” but resorted to harmless-sounding synonyms unintelligible except to the born conspirator.

One noticed that the men of the upper classes were more democratic than usual. Men of distinguished appearance would stop in the *plaza* to chat with the barefoot rabble whom they ordinarily passed without recognition. Politicians were now cultivating good will. They would soon need this rabble as cannon fodder.

It was said that Carías would start *his* insurrection on Christmas Eve. The government, as a precaution against the assembling of a crowd, forbade the holding of the usual midnight mass at the Cathedral. When I spoke English over the telephone the day before, in conversation with a member of the American colony, I was interrupted by the frantic voice of a censor, clamoring that I confine myself to Spanish, and shortly thereafter a police official waited upon me and put me through a courteous third degree.

A later report stated that the government had taken five hundred prisoners, and that the revolution was postponed. But an air of expectancy still hung over the Capital. Christmas Eve—*La Noche Buena*—was gloomy. A drizzle of rain fell intermittently. The street lamps, never very bright in Tegucigalpa, seemed unusually dim. The sidewalks were deserted save for patrols of soldiers, who stopped me at each corner to search for weapons.

On the night before, all had been gayety. Over in Camyaguela, the suburb across the river, there had

been a religious festival—*la fiesta de la Concepción la Purísima*—the festival of the Purest Conception. The Cathedral had been surrounded by improvised board shacks where booze was sold. At tables in the open, lighted by flaring torches, there had been roulette wheels and other gambling devices. There had been music in the *plaza*, and the belles of the town—all with white faces, but with tell-tale arms and necks varying in color from a creamy tint to a deep chocolate brown—had paraded around and around the park, while the young dandies fairly impaled themselves on the fence-pickets to watch them.

But to-night gayety stayed indoors. Through the open windows I could see an occasional tinsel-decked tree, but more frequently a *navidad*, the old Spanish Christmas decoration—a triangular stage in one corner of the parlor, covered with artificial grass, with a little cave at the rear, wherein reposed replicas of Mary and Jesus. Other figures filled the foreground, according to the family's resources. There were the three wise men, mounted on toy burros. There were tin soldiers and paper soldiers, cardboard houses, cardboard trees, toy animals, toy railway trains—everything imaginable—until the humble manger was surrounded by all the creatures of the zoo and all the inventions of modern civilization. The whole display was decked with pine-boughs and thatches of banana leaf. Each family was very proud of its *navidad*, and if I paused to in-



SOLDIERS STOPPED A PEDESTRIAN AT EVERY CORNER TO
SEARCH FOR WEAPONS

dulge a traveler's curiosity by staring through the window—an impulse quite irresistible in these countries, where windows open directly upon the street, and are left unshuttered by a people whose greatest joy in life is to be looked at—the family would invite me inside, that I might examine the display at close range.

They were quietly happy, these people, yet they seemed listening always for the first boom of the cannon. Nothing happened, however. Nothing ever did happen in Latin America while I was present. From day to day I had heard what sounded like the rattle of musketry, and had rushed out to see the fighting, only to learn that the rattle came from the ungreased wheels of an ox-cart lumbering over the rough cobbles.

At the Consul's Christmas dinner, attended by a dozen of the leading Americans in town, every one had had the same experience.

“There was a crowd gathering on the hill to-day,” some one remarked. “The police came up in a body and dispersed it.”

“Did you hear the shooting night before last?” another inquired. “There were several pistol shots, and then the burst of a machine gun. I wonder how soon they will really start?”

But the American Minister, from the seat of honor at the right of the host, merely smiled.

“There will be no revolution,” he predicted.

“Do you mean the United States will intervene?”

He merely smiled again. Still, I felt that there was hope. The ox-carts were sounding more and more like musketry every day.

x

Christmas having provided no thrills, Tegucigalpa looked forward to New Year's. On that day Congress was to convene to choose a president. Whoever was chosen would probably be obliged to fight the other two candidates.

In the meantime, I hired a mule and rode out to see the American-owned Rosario mines at San Juancito, forty kilometers from the capital.

The trail was rugged, but it led through magnificent scenery, among pine-clad mountains, ascending a ridge seven thousand feet high, where the clouds formed a heavy wet blanket yet opened occasionally to permit a glimpse of wild tropical forest below.

Most mining properties are situated in barren, desolate regions. That of the Rosario Company, the largest silver mine in Central America, is situated in a glorious valley, and from its neat white buildings one looks down upon a misty wilderness that stretches away through countless lower valleys, with a silver ribbon of water curling through them toward the sea. Despite its isolation, and the one

rough mule-trail that connects the mine with the rest of the world, it roared with industry. There was a reverberating chorus of giant crushers, the rattle of cars on many miles of narrow-gauge track, the crash of ore-bearing rock dumped into the stamp-mills, the hum of massive machinery.

“We brought everything out in ox-cart or on mule-back,” said the young-appearing superintendent. “We now have seventy miles of tunnel, and employ eight hundred men in Rosario—thirteen hundred indirectly. And less than thirty *gringo* bosses run the whole thing. We used to have twice the force, but we’ve cut it down. There’s efficiency, nowadays, even forty kilometers from a town in Honduras. We turned out two million ounces of silver this year.”

The *gringo* bosses were quiet, earnest young men, intent upon their work. There were none of the roistering adventurers that one looks for in the wilds of a Honduran jungle. They drank moderately—very moderately, it seemed to one who had worked in an Andean mining camp—and never carried revolvers, except when visiting the native town in the gulch below, which averaged two murders every Sunday. They spent most of their spare time in the club room—a comfortable room with a big fireplace, pool tables, piano and victrola, and a complete library.

The camp was at an altitude of five thousand feet.

The night was cold. The blazing fire was agreeable.

“This is the tropics,” said one of them, “and I have to pay double life insurance rates for living here, when it’s much more healthy than any place in the United States.”

The superintendent drew me aside, and led me upstairs to hear his radio. The blare of jazz was as clear as though one listened in from New York.

“That’s Vincent Lopez, in the grill-room of the Pennsylvania. Wait a minute ’til I get Schenectady, and we’ll have a bed-time story.”

Out here in the wilderness, forty kilometers from the nearest town, and many hundred miles from a railway, *gringo* energy had produced all the comforts of home. And *gringo* industry was furnishing much of the wealth that flowed into the Honduran treasury.

XI

The real mainstay of the Honduran treasury is the East Coast, where several American fruit companies own extensive banana plantations.

It has little connection with the rest of the country. A newly instituted service by airplane now enables one to reach it from Tegucigalpa in a couple of days, but unless one can afford this method of travel, one must go by mule, and the journey takes about two weeks.

The several *gringo* concerns have so developed

the formerly worthless, fever-stricken swamps of the Caribbean, that to-day it contains almost half the population of Honduras, and produces eighty-two per cent. of the country's revenue, and both ratios are increasing in favor of the Coast. Nearly all the revolutions start in this region, partly because of its isolation from the Capital where the government holds sway, and partly because in cutting off the revenue the revolutionists can starve the government into surrender.

With every revolution—as in all these countries—come rumors that some American company is back of it, financing a new régime as the cheapest road to new concessions. The rumors are so recurrent that some of them are probably true. But the Honduraneans as a whole are rather fond of insurrection, whether started by foreigners or by their own countrymen. Living in a country for the most part unfertile and unproductive, whose resources can be developed only by much toil and trouble, they find it easier to leave constructive work to the *gringo*, while they squabble among themselves for control of the government.

XII

January first arrived, and Congress met.

I went to the Capitol with Mario Ribas, who was the Associated Press Correspondent and the editor

of Tegucigalpa's leading magazine. He was a Spaniard and a neutral in politics.

"If any one starts shooting," he advised, "the quickest way out of the building is that of sliding down the shed, running across the *patio*, and climbing over the roof."

The legislators met in a long, narrow room filled with plain wooden benches. On the wall were the pictures of former presidents, almost none of whom had been able to finish his term before succeeded by one of the others. The chamber's only real embellishments were the many flags and draperies of blue and white that hung from the ceiling.

At the entrance was a company of boy soldiers from the military school—none of them twenty years of age, but considered the most dependable of the government troops. Their officers scanned every one who entered the Capitol, but they knew Ribas, and passed us without question.

The congressmen assembled gradually, each of them appearing a trifle nervous. They wore high hats and Prince Albert coats, but a suspicious bulge at the hip testified that each was ready for a possible emergency, and when a coat swung accidentally open, one caught a glimpse of a well-filled cartridge belt.

Still, the first day passed without disturbance. There was a slight row when the august body voted down a motion to make some trifling alteration to

the minutes of the last meeting. The deputy whose motion was defeated rose indignantly. With the amazing sensitiveness of the Latin-American, he felt that he had been personally insulted. Furiously he turned and stamped out of Congress, seizing his hat and cane from the rack outside, and knocking down the hats of several other deputies in his haste. They all rushed out, picked up their hats, wiped off the dust, and hung them up again. Then the meeting resumed, interrupted by other slight rows, as other men took offense because their suggestions were not received enthusiastically, and followed the exit of the first.

Finally the remaining few sent a committee to inform the President that they were ready to listen to his opening message. The cadets formed a double line from the Palace to the Capitol, and the President came in person, walking at the head of the cabinet and the diplomatic corps. He was a worried-looking little man, and he walked with tired step. Four bands cheered him with the National Anthem, all playing in different tempo, a boom of cannon greeted him from the fortress, and his boy soldiers presented arms at sixty different angles. The crowds applauded, and I was reaching into my pocket for a handkerchief to wave at him, when a firm hand closed upon my wrist, and I looked into the hard face of a Honduran secret service man.

“Pardon, *señor!*” he said, as he saw that I had

only a handkerchief. "One can not be too careful these days."

Then the President disappeared into the Capitol to read his message, and the soldiers barred the gates to sight-seers.

"There'll be nothing happening to-day," said Ribas. "It takes them a while to get started. Wait until they meet to-morrow."

XIII

But nothing happened on the morrow, or the day after that. Congress was still indulging in oratory. From time to time some one suggested a vote on the presidential question, but whenever it appeared that Arias might have enough supporters present to elect him, the adherents of Carías and Bonilla hastily seized their high silk hats and rushed outside so that there would be no quorum.

By this time most of the deputies were wearing two guns. Rumor stated that one Congressman had also added to his equipment a *machete*, a sword cane and a pair of brass knuckles. It began to look as though *he* might be able to settle the dispute. Then, by order of the President, the military stopped each Congressman at the door and disarmed him. And the indignant legislators were so incensed that they refused to meet. The Hall of Congress stood empty.

Rumors flew thick and fast again. Carías had

slipped out of the city last night! He had gone to the east coast to organize his revolution! No, *señor*, he had done nothing of the kind! He had gone to the west coast. *Ay*, but he had just been seen at his dwelling in Tegucigalpa, he was still in the city! Perhaps the revolution would start right here!

There came another night when the outbreak was expected.

“Do not go out this evening,” urged little Petrona, as she brought my evening beans to the table. “You may be killed in the street if you are not careful.”

But my experience in Latin America had taught me that it is always some one else who is killed there. Having missed seeing so many insurrections elsewhere, I felt it a duty to witness this one. And I wandered through the dim streets, deserted as on Christmas Eve, and gloomy again with drizzling rain. The soldiery were again on patrol, searching me at every half block, even though they had seen me searched by their cohorts just a few feet away.

No open windows gave me a view to-night of families gathered about a Christmas tree. Doors and windows alike were shut and tightly barred. Not a soul was to be met except the barefoot troops. Not a light was to be seen except the flickering street lamp at each corner.

At the leading hotel the door was unlocked, and I pushed inside. Instead of the usual swarm of na-

tive aristocrats, the only occupants of the café were the bartender, a bootblack, and three *gringos*. They were Doc, Sparks, and Pop. Doc had the little bootblack on his knee, feeding him cheese, and teaching him to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Sparks was shaking dice with the bartender to determine which should give the other his hat and go home bareheaded. Pop had four bottles of whiskey before him, with which the party was about to adjourn to his room, and he was covering the back of an envelope with figures in his effort to determine how four bottles could be evenly distributed among three men. Seeing me he threw the pencil in the air.

"Solved!" he cried.

And we adjourned to Pop's quarters in the second story of the annex. I had some qualms as to the advisability of joining, for I dreaded the prospect of missing the revolution, but the other *gringos* already had reached the stage where refusal of such an invitation is considered an affront. Arrived in Pop's room, they listened to my protest, and overruled it.

"You don't need to see a revolution. We'll tell you all about everything that happened in the whole history of Honduras. What do you want first?"

"How about the last revolution?"

Doc, elected raconteur for the three, assumed the attitude of a high-school declaimer, and announced:

"The last revolution." He cleared his throat,

and commenced dramatically. "I was standing in the doorway of the Young Men's Christian Association—"

"In the doorway of the Agurcia," corrected Sparks.

"Of the Agurcia, when suddenly a machine gun started banging down the street, and the bar-room door went shut behind me, catapulting me into the middle of the road. I picked myself up, and made a rush for the W.C.T.U. across the way—

"For the what?"

"For the establishment across the way, and *they* slammed the doors in my face. I made a bee-line for the Epworth League meeting around the corner, and the barkeeper there—"

He paused to pour another round and forgot to resume. He walked out to the balcony with the empty bottle and returned with the sorrowful comment, "Nobody to throw it at. What do you want to hear about next?"

"Tell him about the badger fight," suggested Pop.

Pop had stripped off his clothing, and now sat naked on the bed, a rather slender old gentleman, whose white hair still gave him something of dignity. Young Sparks was crawling under the bureau after the corkscrew. Doc, big and rotund, with cheerful ruddy face, again took the floor.

"The badger fight. We got the Salvadorean minister to be the badger's second. He came direct

from some diplomatic function, wearing his top hat, and his long coat, and his striped pants, and his spats, and patent leather shoes. We took him up to the hill, where we had the badger-cage all padded with straw. The dog that was to fight the badger was a big, ugly bloodhound. All the minister had to do was take hold of the rope, and pull the badger out of the cage, we explained, only we thought it best to put a stove-pipe over each of his legs, and cover his chest with a baseball protector, and put a mask over his face, and long gauntlets on his arms. You should have seen him in that get-up, with a silk hat on top of it all. We gave him the end of the rope, and said 'Go!' He was so scared, he forgot to let go of the rope, and when we all started yelling down hill, he beat the whole gang, still dragging behind him the old slop bucket that was in the badger-cage. But he was game. He took us all back to town and bought the—"

Association of ideas brought Doc's eye to another bottle, and he emptied it into the glasses, shampooing Pop's white hair with the dregs of it.

"At-a-boy, shampoo it!" chuckled Pop.

And Doc shampooed industriously. "Gimme the scissors," he commanded. "Don't cut it off!" protested Sparks. But Pop was game. "Cut it all off!" he cried wrecklessly. The party was getting rough. Sparks seized an armful of bottles and commenced hurling them from the balcony. They

crashed noisily upon the silent street. Pop seized a paper bag, blew it up, and smote it with a loud, "Bang!"

If I were ever going to see the revolution, it was time to make my exit. I ducked out quietly, strolled downstairs and around the corner, and reached the avenue just in time to hear the excitement. A volley of musketry sounded from the barracks a few blocks away. Policemen were blowing their whistles, and running up and down. I chased after one.

"Where is it?" I demanded.

He was too busy blowing his whistle to answer me. More policemen joined us, and we ran toward the *plaza*, colliding with another patrol running from the opposite direction. Here or there a scattering shot resounded, but one could not judge its source. We raced around corners, up and down the street, asking other parties where the trouble was to be found, but no one knew. At length the shooting subsided, and I went home to bed.

The next morning I made inquiries.

"There was no revolution, *señor!* Only a couple of drunken *Americanos* blowing up paper bags and smashing bottles!"

XIV

Tegucigalpa was quiet again.

The American Minister drove past my hotel in a

big automobile filled with American naval officers in gold braid and cocked hats. The warship *Rochester*, flag-ship of the Panama squadron, was now anchored off Amapala. Admiral Dayton had come up to the Capital with his staff on what was described officially as "nothing more than a courtesy visit." But it was reported that American gunboats were now lying off the east coast ports, ready to protect American property at the banana plantations. And it was humorously said in Tegucigalpa that the Admiral was about to reconvene Congress and preside over it himself.

"There will be much speculation regarding this visit," suggested an American at the Legation.

The Minister smiled.

"I think there will be no speculation at all."

Honduras apparently had taken the hint. Just how the election difficulties were to be solved, no one knew, but every one agreed that they would be solved peacefully. Wherefore I caught the daily passenger truck down to Amapala to continue my journey to Nicaragua.

But, as always in these countries, the unexpected happened. The American warship, as soon as peace had settled upon Honduras, steamed away. And a few days later the whole Republic was in flames. Cable dispatches informed the world that Carías had slipped out of Tegucigalpa, joined forces awaiting him near the Nicaraguan border, and started back

to the capital, that President Gutierrez had fled to Amapala and died there from nervous strain, that the other candidates were leading troops in other sections of the country, that machine guns were sweeping the streets of the cities, that American citizens were taking refuge in the Legation, that the Rosario mines were calling for protection, and that American marines were landing at the banana plantations of the East Coast.

Such is life in Honduras!

CHAPTER XV

WHERE MARINES MAKE PRESIDENTS

I

TO journey from one Central-American republic to another, the traveler should equip himself with a private yacht.

Having neglected this precaution, he must resort to patience. There is a steamship service along the Pacific Coast which advertises regular sailing dates. But since its vessels are quite apt to be ahead of their schedules, one usually repairs to the seaport a day or two in advance. And since they are far more apt to be behind their schedules, one usually waits there for a period varying from one to three weeks, at a shabby hotel in a blazing hot town whose inhabitants earn their living by overcharging such travelers as fate has thus thrown into their grasp.

II

Not possessing the private yacht, I left Tegucigalpa for Amapala one day in advance.

Bill, the hard-boiled, took me down the mountain road to San Lorenzo, where a launch was already

waiting. There a member of the crew undertook to facilitate my voyage. He greeted me with a smile as I reached the end of the wharf.

“I’m the man who carried your suit-case, *señor*.”

“I carried it myself.”

“Did you really? Then I’ll put it on board for you.”

Since a squad of Honduran soldiers held all passengers on the wharf until the baggage was aboard, I surrendered it to him, and he placed it on the extreme edge of the stern, precariously balanced on the small end, tying it fast with the rest of the cargo, but with a flimsy piece of cord which threatened at any moment to break and spill the entire load into the Gulf of Fonseca.

“It’s all right,” he assured me. “I have my eye on it!”

Then, as the soldiers finally permitted us to embark—after an official had ascertained that my passport was properly viséd by the Honduran Minister of Foreign Relations—the officious *mozo* climbed upon the thwarts to offer me an unnecessary hand. “When we arrived at Amapala, *señor*, I’ll show you to the hotel.”

“I already know one hotel there.”

“Then I’ll show you to the other one.”

I had frequently encountered his type in nearly every port of the world. He believed all traveling Yankees to be simpletons with the one redeeming

virtue of lavishness in bestowing tips for useless services. Throughout the four-hour ride across the Gulf, he sat opposite me, smiling sweetly whenever he could catch my attention. And when we drew up beside the wharf at Amapala, he untied my suitcase first. But having untied it, he left it while he assisted the rest of the crew in dragging eight heavy trunks up a slippery flight of wooden steps.

According to local custom, another squad of soldiers herded all passengers ashore to answer another questionnaire, and from the dock I looked down to see my suitcase dancing and rocking unsteadily with each swell that rolled in from the misnamed Pacific. From the opposite end of the launch, the *mozo* held up his palm in the Latin-American gesture that signifies, "Patience."

"*No hay cuidado, señor.* I'm watching it."

But it was already toppling. And the shadowy figure of a shark, cruising about the murky waters below, suggested the impracticability of recovering it later by diving. Avoiding the guard, I landed back on the launch, and caught the suitcase just as it started to fall. Four ragged urchins, waiting on the dock to carry baggage, leaped after me to struggle for its possession. The *mozo* joined the fray. We surged back and forth across the deck, while the shark waited below, until our battle was interrupted by a policeman with drawn revolver.

"You are arrested!" he screamed at me.

And he marched me to the *commandancia*, where a pompous official lectured me, politely but firmly, upon the insult I had paid the government of Honduras. It was a small country, he said, but it possessed high ideals. The authority of its army was a thing to be respected. Considering that I was a foreigner and not acquainted with local customs, I would be forgiven. But in the future, he hoped I should never jump off a dock onto a boat until all cargo was unloaded.

As I walked out of the office, still clinging to my suit-case, the *mozo* came up to demand his tip for keeping an eye on it. I waited a moment to see how much the policeman would expect for his services in arresting me, but he collected only the customary fee which all passengers paid for the use of the wharf in disembarking.

So I turned toward the steamship office, to learn when I might proceed to Nicaragua.

“*Quién sabe?* We expected two passenger vessels. But the one, last night at La Unión, went back to La Libertad for six more sacks of coffee. And the other, having filled with coffee at San José de Guatemala, has canceled its schedule entirely.”

III

I stopped at the leading hotel, operated—like most hotels on this coast—by a Chinaman.

It was the usual type of seaport hostelry, less comfortable and more expensive than those of the interior cities, but well stocked with fleas, bugs, liquor, and flirtatious servant maids.

“What does one do in this town for amusement?” I asked a native.

“Amusement?” He seemed a little surprised. “Why, *señor*, there are *plenty* of women.”

For occupation, the male population carried the baggage of passing travelers. The female population took in washing. Rather dark, and not distinguished for beauty, the younger ones called at the hotel for the laundry; the older ones did the work. They took the clothes to the waterfront, laid the garments on flat rocks, and pounded the buttons off with a stout club. Then they left them to bleach, spreading them out on scrubby little bushes whose berries stained them with yellow spots, while they themselves—already stripped to the waist for comfort—retired to the shallow water to immerse themselves through the hot mid-day. In the evening they collected the garments, carried them home, and ripped them into shreds with rusty irons. Finally, having wrapped them into a neat bundle with the least-ruined articles on top, the younger girls brought them back with smiling countenances, and the inquiry:

“Is that all, *señor*?”

As a town, Amapala was not unpicturesque. Its



A BANANA-BOAT LOADING ON THE EAST COAST

whitewashed houses, beneath red-tiled roofs, were set amid palms and bougainvillea. If at noon it seemed to wither under the dry white heat of a tropic sun, there was usually a breeze in the evening, with a tang of salt from the ocean. Across the Gulf of Fonseca, if one looked beyond the fleet of scows and lighters in the foreground, one could see myriad islands and the cones of several Salvadorean volcanoes. There was a play of red and gold at sunset, then the purple and silver of twilight, and finally a glorious night with stars twinkling above and fireflies below, and the glare of the volcanoes tracing a crimson path through the waters of the bay.

Its only point of interest, however, was the cliff where occurred a bloody incident in a long-past war between Nicaragua and Honduras. Some many years ago Nicaragua, having confiscated a smuggling schooner, had armed it with a cannon, and feeling rather cocky in its possession of a navy, had dispatched it to fight Honduras. It came up to Amapala and fired one shot. The bloody incident occurred when a Honduran, standing on the cliff, craned his neck to see where the shot landed, and fell into the Gulf of Fonseca.

From the cone of the extinct volcano that rose above Amapala, one could see Honduras, Salvador, and Nicaragua. Each was but a few hours' distance from the other, yet the traveler might wait indefinitely for a boat. Shields, my companion on the auto

trip from Guatemala to Santa Ana, was now in Amapala, also bound for Nicaragua, and had already been waiting over a week.

He spent most of his time on the hotel veranda, scanning the horizon with a telescope. This operation afforded much entertainment for the village idiot. Each Central-American port seems to contain one weak-minded or defective youth, who sits all day at the hotel to watch the every movement of a visiting foreigner. In Amapala it was "The Dummy."

He was a harmless, pleasant little brown fellow in ragged breeches and an undershirt salvaged from the rubbish pile. How he lived, no one seemed able to explain. Some one apparently fed him. No one apparently washed him. Occasionally he earned a few pennies by performing tricks for tourists. His chief accomplishment was that of resting his bare toe upon a lighted cigarette. He was always cheerful, and affable, and he would chat with us by the hour in parrot-like squawks made intelligible by a marvelous art of mimicry. He could describe any one in Amapala by a single gesture. For the *Commandante* he twisted an imaginary mustache. For the Chinaman, he pulled down his cheeks to give his eyes an oblique slant. He became our constant associate and entertainer, guide, counselor and friend.

From time to time, as an alternative amusement, Shields wrote passionate love letters to the daughters of the *Commandante*—the only two white girls

in town—to which missives, I later learned, he usually signed my name. The Dummy would serve as emissary, and upon his return would enact the giggling of the *señoritas*, and the wrathful explosions of their parents.

Toward evening, the two girls sometimes made their appearance to stroll in the *plaza*, accompanied by a male relative with a rifle. Occasionally they would stop at the hotel for a glass of lemonade, and would subject Shields and myself to the careful scrutiny to which *señoritas* invariably subject a strange youth, while their companion sat beside them with the rifle over his knees. Still later the *Commandante* himself would join them, favoring us with a stern military glance of warning.

The Dummy always sidled away at his approach, for the *Commandante* had arrested him not long ago. He often told us the story in his own crude language. The trouble had been about a woman. From his ecstatic expression, she must have been beautiful. He would point at his face, then at his black trousers, to suggest her complexion, and a twist of his fingers would indicate kinky hair. He showed us in pantomime the evil intentions of a rival. He seized a rock and planted it with much zest against the villain's imaginary skull. He whistled shrilly. That was a policeman! He slumped into a heap as the imaginary club descended upon his head. He placed his wrists together. Handcuffed! He held up ten

fingers. The *Commandante* had sentenced him to ten days! Then he gave a series of unintelligible parrot-squawks, and pointed toward La Unión. During his imprisonment, the girl had fled with the rival! He shook his head sadly, and ran a hand across his throat. Was he meditating suicide? Or was he planning revenge? His story always ended in the harsh, mirthless laughter of an imbecile, and he sidled away, for the *Commandante*, having partaken of his cocktail, was leading his family home.

In the evening the Consular Agent, fat and jovial, would drop in for a glass of beer. His only official duty at present was looking after a Panamanian sailor who had fallen down the hold of the last vessel in port and broken a shoulder bone.

"It might have killed a white man, but you can't hurt these natives. Down in Nicaragua, I saw one fellow sink a pen-knife two inches into another fellow's skull. We just pulled it out, and the man went on working."

And many other yarns would follow, the locale varying from Chile, where they use those little curved blades with an upward thrust, to the Philippines, where the Moros take your head off with one deft swing of a bolo. We would all collaborate, the stories growing more and more astounding until we reached the incident of the Mexican who swam two miles after a shark had bitten off his stomach.

"I believe it," the Consular Agent would nod.

“Down in Costa Rica a shark bit one of my pearl-divers, and took out a chunk as big as a watermelon. We clapped it back on, plastered the edges with a little mud—”

Then we would have another beer, and the Consular Agent would stroll homeward. The street lamps flickered. Five ragged soldiers—the night patrol—glided past us like phantoms through the dark street. A *peon* girl hurried along the sidewalk, and the Dummy, bidding us good-night, ran after her with shrill parrot-like squawks. Within the hotel the Chinaman sat imperturbable as a Buddha, waiting to close up his establishment, while the town's three German merchants drowsed at a table.

Shields and I would rise and yawn.

“To-morrow there may be a boat.”

IV

The one break in the day's monotony came at mid-afternoon.

Then a shore-party from the *Rochester*, still lingering far out in the harbor, would shoot past the waterfront in a trim white launch, and come rolling up the long wharf to see the sights of town.

Whenever the Chinaman saw them coming, he would shout for all his servants to man the bar.

The sailors, seeming to know the local geography instinctively, headed straight for the hotel. While

their Ship's Police scattered out through town with swinging clubs, the tars all trooped into the establishment.

“Hello there, buddy! Say, kin you talk this spig language? Tell that Chink we want liquor!”

And presently they were all over the city, bargaining in every shop, contriving somehow despite their ignorance of Spanish to obtain whatever they desired. They purchased native rope bags, and filled them with fresh eggs, live turtles, earthenware jars, Spanish daggers, goat-skulls, fruits, vegetables, and snake skins. They stood on street corners, frowning over handfuls of unfamiliar coins received in exchange, wondering to what extent they had been cheated.

“Hey there, feller. You're a Yank, ain't you? Tell me how much I've got here in *real* money.”

One husky tar, with a sailor's knack of getting acquainted, rolled up the street with a native girl on his arm, amid the cheers of his friends. He had a sandwich in one hand, and a flask in the other. She was a chubby little brown creature, in a tight-fitting red dress, and her short fat legs bulged above the tops of high, tightly-laced boots that appeared newly purchased.

“Wait a minute, sister. We're goin' in here an' get you a hat. You'll be some swell skoit when I get finished wit' you.”

They vanished into a shop. When they emerged,

the lady wore a green and yellow bonnet trimmed with purple and blue. She was leading her hero toward the village photographer's to immortalize in tintype this thrilling event. They came out with the photographer's parrot. The sailor had purchased it, and was teaching it to say:

“To hell wit' the marines!”

Gradually, as the hour of departure drew near, all would gravitate toward the saloon at the wharf, where they purchased more flasks of whiskey for the journey to their ship. The little native bartender, overwhelmed at the many orders shouted at him in a strange tongue, became completely paralyzed, whereupon every one helped himself, and tossed greenbacks across the bar. At last the S.P.'s commenced to herd the crowd toward their launch. A delinquent always came running from town at the last moment, his bag of eggs bouncing against his uniform and creating golden havoc. The little native bartender came to life to scream that two flasks had not been paid for. The escort of the lady in the red dress had a fight at the end of the wharf with several of his cronies who considered it their privilege to kiss her farewell.

“Act like gentlemen, you — — —, or I'll poke you one in the snout!”

Then, packed into their trim white craft, they were gone, leaving Amapala flooded with crisp new American greenbacks.

v

Our steamer finally came.

After our two weeks of waiting, it picked us up and landed us within eight hours at the Nicaraguan port of Corinto.

For years Nicaragua had been the especial protégé of the United States government, financed by American bankers, and policed by American marines. Having traveled for several months in republics not blessed with such attentions, a *gringo* naturally looked forward to the progressiveness and modernity of Nicaragua.

No difference was evident.

We landed at a fairly good dock, and sat there for three hours while the American-supervised customs officials finished their *siesta*. Then we passed into such a town as might have formed the locale of O. Henry's "Cabbages and Kings."

The unpaved streets were grown with grass, neatly cropped by grazing herds of livestock. The buildings were mostly flimsy wooden structures sadly in need of paint. There was nothing to distinguish Corinto—the principal seaport of Nicaragua—from any other port along the Central-American coast.

A railway—one of the American-managed institutions—carried me inland through a scraggly jungle. The country was comparatively level; occasional

volcanic peaks, rising abruptly from the plain, had rendered it fertile with their lava dust; frequent lakes indicated a plentiful water supply. Yet one observed few of the rich plantations that covered such land in the other Central-American republics; occasionally there was a field of pineapples or sugarcane; as a rule, the road led through wilderness.

León, the second city of Nicaragua, lay thick in dust. Its streets were unpaved. Its houses, of brilliant green or yellow, with trimmings of blue and red, were resplendent in the blinding tropic sunlight, but upon close inspection, they proved somewhat dilapidated. Its cathedral towers, rising at every corner, were cracked and ridden from earthquake and revolution. The whole town seemed very old and very sleepy, and drowsing in the memories of a past. The American occupation had brought an end to civil strife on a large scale, but it evidently had not brought the prosperity to mend its ravages.

Managua, the capital, was in no better repair. It was situated at an altitude of only 140 feet—by far the lowest altitude of any Central-American capital. It sweltered in heat, relieved somewhat by the breezes from its lakefront, but like Corinto and León it was a city of sand, and the breezes filled the streets with swirling dust. Each lumbering ox-cart left a cloud in its wake. It lay two inches deep on the main avenues. It covered the grassless *plaza*, and the barren expanse of desert before the old cathe-

dral, where vegetation was sprouting from a fallen spire. It settled upon the low roofs of the drab shops and dwellings. It seeped inside through door or window, and formed a coating upon the tiled floor of the hotel. Now and then a civic employée would turn a hose upon some portion of the Sahara, to convert it momentarily to mud, but no sooner did he cease than the blazing sun reconverted it to sand, and the breezes sent it whirling again.

Nicaragua was a country of many natural advantages. Its people appeared to be of better caliber than those of Honduras. Its area—49,200 square miles—was the greatest in Central America. Its land was all suitable for cultivation. Its potential wealth—in mahogany and hardwoods, in gold and silver and other metals—is estimated by many authorities to exceed that of any of its neighbors. Yet the imports and exports of this largest republic were far below those of Salvador, the smallest. Its cities—although upon closer inspection, they proved to contain better shops and hotels—were outwardly less imposing than those of Honduras. And when I offered a merchant a ten-dollar bill, he threw up his hands with the exclamation:

“You must change your large money at the bank!”

I turned to an Old-Timer, himself an American.

“Hasn’t our country done anything to make this a regular republic?”

“Son,” he said, “this *was* a regular republic before our country stepped in.”

VI

The story of the American coöperation—which the Nicaraguans themselves describe by a less pleasant word—dates back to 1909.

At that time Nicaragua had a Dictator. José Santos Zelaya had been reëlecting himself president for seventeen years. He had commenced his reign, stern though it was, with fairness and justice toward his countrymen and friendliness toward foreigners. In his later years, overwhelmed with conceit at his success, he came to regard his Dictatorship as a right that carried with it the privilege to amuse himself as he saw fit. If he needed money, he horsewhipped the wealthier merchants until they offered a “voluntary” contribution. If he saw a woman he desired, he sent for her to come to the palace. Presently he commenced to meddle in his neighbor’s affairs, fomenting revolutions in the adjoining countries, and thumbing his nose at the United States.

In 1909 a revolution started in his own country, over at the isolated port of Bluefields on the Caribbean coast. There are rumors that it had the backing of American capitalists. These rumors arise from the fact that Adolfo Diaz, then the treasurer of the revolution—and later the leading actor in the

drama—was an humble employee of an American concern. Diaz denies these rumors. “Every penny,” he told me in Managua, “was contributed by Nicaraguans.” But certain it is that the revolution had the sympathy of the United States government.

President Taft, at the time, frankly described Zelaya in a message to Congress as “an international nuisance.” And when, during the fighting, the Zelayistas executed two American soldiers-of-fortune caught red-handed attempting to dynamite troopships on the San Juan River, the American government made this trivial incident the pretext for hinting broadly that it was time for Zelaya to resign. Zelaya did resign, leaving the presidency in the hands of an excellent man backed by all the old lieutenants of the *Zelayista* party. The United States was not satisfied. And when the *Zelayistas*, having licked the revolutionists to a frazzle, were about to take their stronghold at Bluefields, an American gunboat intervened on the ground that further fighting might destroy American property.

From some mysterious source—which all Latin America believes to be the United States—the revolutionists obtained new ammunition. They sallied out from Bluefields again, thrashed the *Zelayistas*, and overturned the government. One General Estrada, the leader of the insurrection, became presi-

dent, but he soon gave way to Adolfo Diaz. Now enters upon the scene the American banker.

President Diaz found the country bankrupt. There is much controversy as to how the debt originated, each party blaming it on the other. The truth is that Zelaya had left several millions in the treasury because he had just negotiated a loan with British bankers and had not had time to spend it. He also left a long list of claims because of his high-handed confiscation of property. The revolutionists had doubled the bill by their own destruction of property during the warfare. Wherefore blame is divided. The important fact is that Don Adolfo found his country in debt to the extent of over thirty-two million dollars, a staggering sum to a small republic. He called upon a firm of New York bankers for a loan of fifteen million.

This transaction was arranged through the American State Department by a treaty which the Senate—newly turned democratic when Wilson replaced Taft—refused to ratify. Nicaragua, however, regarded it as an agreement. As security for the loan, the bankers took over the collection of the customs, and arranged to look after the whole business of the national debt. They never advanced the loan. They did advance a million and a half, followed by comparatively trifling sums, to stabilize the currency and reorganize the national bank, but they also took over the bank. Later, when another

million was advanced, they took over the operation of the Nicaraguan railway.

President Diaz, now retired to civil life, assumes full responsibility for these transactions. He is a pleasant little gentleman with graying hair and a frank, boyish smile.

“I asked the bankers to do it. I was taking the only means I had to bring my country out of financial chaos. But I became, as a result, the most hated man in Nicaragua.”

In fact, all Nicaragua called him a traitor, accused him of selling the republic to the American capitalists, and rose to overthrow him. For three days, in 1912, the rest of the country poured cannon balls into Managua, until President Diaz asked the United States for protection. Two thousand American marines were promptly landed. Having suppressed the revolution, they left a “legation guard” in Managua as an intimation that the United States stood ready to suppress any further uprisings.

Indirectly these marines make presidents to-day.

Elections in Nicaragua are as much a farce as in Mexico. Whoever controls the polls wins the verdict. Wherefore the Conservative party, which first invited the American bankers, has remained steadily in power. It can be defeated only by revolution, which the marines prevent.

“You ought to be here at election time,” said an old American resident, “and see them run their vot-

ers from one booth to another by the truckload. They number about one-tenth of the population, but they always win.”

If the marines were withdrawn—even the Conservatives themselves admitted to me—the present government would be overthrown within twenty-four hours. Nicaragua, as a whole, never endorsed the invitation to the American capitalists. When the Conservatives invited them, the entire country turned Liberal. If Zelaya were to come to life and return to Managua, he would find the republic waiting with open arms. But while the marines are present, the Liberals are helpless.

At the time of my visit another election campaign was starting. Realizing their dependence upon Washington, the Liberals had affected a change of heart, announcing that they would support the bankers as ardently as the Conservatives, and asking for a new election law which would keep their opponents from stuffing the ballot boxes. A new law had been drafted by a New York lawyer. The Liberals were hopeful, but uncertain.

“Who will be your candidate?” I asked one of their leaders.

“We do not know yet,” he said. “We have not heard who will be most acceptable to Washington.”

During my several weeks in Managua, I talked with most of the actors who had played leading rôles in the international drama. I do not believe that the

United States was guilty of a deep-laid plot to gain possession of the little republic. I believe that the American government acted for the best interests of the Nicaraguans. But when one reviews the train of events since 1909, one sees at a glance that they can very easily be misinterpreted until they look decidedly nasty. First came a revolution, assisted by an American gunboat, which doubled the already-overwhelming national debt. Then came American bankers, taking charge of the national debt, and exacting as security everything of value in the republic. Then came the American marines, keeping in power the minority party that invited the bankers, against the will of Nicaragua itself. And all Latin America chooses to regard these events as part of a deep-laid program of intrigue.

VII

There are always two sides to a question.

Nicaragua, under American supervision, has made progress, but it is a progress which, both to the permanent resident and the casual tourist, is altogether invisible.

Outwardly, since the coming of the bankers, the republic has marked time. No large industries have been introduced. No railways have been built. The greater part of the country is without means of communication or development. The cities are in worse

repair than those of Honduras. And, although the bankers deny it, every Nicaraguan—and nearly every foreign resident—proclaims that the country is far less prosperous to-day than in the worst days of Zelaya.

This is largely due to the fact that the bankers administering Nicaragua's finances are devoting all their attention to clearing up the old national debt.

Colonel Clifford D. Ham, the American collector of customs, has reduced this debt from over thirty-two million dollars to less than nine million. There is no country in the world, except the United States, whose finances are to-day in such flourishing condition as those of Nicaragua. But this means nothing to the average native. No Latin-American is ever roused individually to a high pitch of enthusiasm over the prospect of paying what he owes. Collectively he finds the idea quite objectionable, particularly when the indebtedness was contracted a long time ago. And so he says, "These Americans turn aside at our very gates every penny that would otherwise flow into the country; they are draining the very life-blood from the nation!" He points to the fact that when the American government, a few years ago, purchased the rights to build a Nicaraguan Canal at some time in the future, and paid therefor three million dollars, the money never left New York, but was applied immediately upon that infernal debt.

The national bank has stabilized the currency, so that the Nicaraguan *cordoba* is on a par with the American dollar. According to the bankers there is more money in circulation to-day in Nicaragua than ever before. But the Nicaraguan insists that prices have risen so that he now can buy only half as much as in the days of Zelaya, forgetting that prices have risen throughout the world. "All the money is in the bank, and I can not obtain credit without giving security!" The Latin is not a hard, cold business man; he resents these business-like methods; he curses the commerciality of the *gringo*.

The railway, when the Americans took it over, was a total wreck. The employees had not been paid for two weeks, since there was just \$2.49 in the cash-drawer. The names of thirty-five dead men were found still on the payroll. Some of the locomotive engineers were barefoot. Most of the workers had to draw their salary in the form of an I.O.U., which could be cashed at a twenty per cent. discount at the office of a local pawnbroker. Every one of any political prominence expected a pass; the more influential were accustomed to private cars, or to the courtesy of having the regular passenger train stop to wait several hours for them while they paid visits along the line. To-day the road is in good shape; it operates systematically as railways should operate; it operates also at a profit instead of a deficit, and is earning money which is steadily rebuying it-

self back into the hands of the Nicaraguan government. But the Nicaraguan is suspicious. Whenever the American manager buys a new locomotive, the newspapers proclaim that he has done so to run up the bills in order that Nicaragua can not regain control of the road.

Some day in the near future the American capitalist will retire, leaving Nicaragua in excellent shape for progress.

Since the Latin-American lives completely in the present, the Nicaraguan can not appreciate work that builds for future prosperity. He sees no visible result of the American coöperation. He knows only that his country has been at a standstill since the Americans came. He loudly damns the *gringo*. And all Latin America echoes his accusations against the scheming Colossus of the North. So, unfortunately, does many an American resident in Nicaragua.

VIII

Nicaragua is a lowland of tropical heat. It has the least invigorating climate in Central America. The natives are not particularly blessed with energy or industry, and are consequently rather eager to blame their lack of initiative to the stifling effect of their subserviency to the United States.

Individually they are quite ready to be friendly to any American. Collectively they love to damn the

gringos. And the newspapers of Managua and León cater regularly to their taste by soaking every Yankee who attains prominence in the republic.

These papers, like the dailies of Guatemala, are mostly four-sheet publications with the flavor of rural journalism. They are printed, usually at a loss, by gentlemen of political aspirations who desire an organ for self-expression. The reporters, inspired by the same vanity, editorialize in every news report. In mentioning the arrival of an actress, they felicitate her and wish her success. In describing the arrest of some petty criminal, they express the hope that he may be convicted and hanged and dealt with not too leniently in purgatory. In attacking Americans, however, they reach their highest flights of eloquence. No article on politics or finance is complete without an allusion to "the oppressive hand of the American banker." And when the banker has been exhausted as a source of indignant outpourings, they give their attention to the other American residents.

On one occasion they flamed out against young René Wallace, the son of a Yankee merchant, because he had organized a league of basket-ball clubs among the young ladies of Nicaraguan society. They proclaimed indignantly that he was trying to deprive the local *señoritas* of all modesty and gentleness by arraying them in bloomers and teaching



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them the hoydenish games wherein no self-respecting woman could indulge.

On another occasion they flamed out against Dr. Daniel M. Molloy, of the Rockefeller Foundation, because the name of Rockefeller suggested to them another capitalistic invasion. This Foundation has been active throughout Central America, particularly in combating hook-worm, wherewith nearly all the barefoot inhabitants are infected. It suppressed a yellow fever epidemic which swept throughout these countries in 1918. It has built hospitals, improved water supplies, taught hygiene, and worked in many other ways for the betterment of the various republics. The ignorant *peons*, indifferent to hygiene, had always regarded sickness and disease as something inevitable, to be accepted with fatalistic patience. In infant mortality, Mexico surpasses all the world's civilized communities, while its total death-rate is thrice that of the United States, and it is safe to assume that the Central-American republics—in the absence of statistics—keep pace with Mexico. The educated classes have never made much effort to relieve this situation. In Tegucigalpa a recently appointed director of a government hospital had to begin his work by removing forty-two cans of garbage left in the hospital *patio* by the last director. The Rockefeller Foundation there, in employing a new native physician of high standing in

the community, discovered that he had never studied bacteriology and had but a vague idea that any diseases were caused by germs. In lands where such conditions prevail, the Foundation should have been hailed as a God-send, especially since it came largely at its own expense. But a newspaper in León published daily editorials attacking Dr. Molloy, and insisting that Rockefeller would presently be demanding oil concessions. When no such demands were forthcoming, the editor found another argument in the fact that Dr. Molloy was advocating new methods in sewerage disposal.

“Aha!” he shouted on his front page. “We see the nigger in the woodpile. This *gringo* is a secret representative of a manufacturing firm that hopes to sell us American plumbing devices!”

IX

At the time of my sojourn in Managua, there was a temporary lull in such attacks, for the city was indulging in its semi-annual outburst of culture.

The aristocrats of Central America are very fond of theatrical entertainment, and some of the republics have built national theaters, but such is the expense of bringing *artistes* from Europe that performances are rare, and usually subsidized by the government.

Frijolita, who had danced before all the crowned heads of Europe, had recently been performing in

Tegucigalpa. The Honduran government, having paid her expenses to the country, had allowed her to get out as best she could, wherefore she was now about to dance in the neighboring capitals. All Nicaragua felt honored. Every poet in the country tuned his lyre, and prepared to sing her praises.

In Central America nearly every one who can write is a poet. The composition of verses is a universal indoor sport among the young men. On Sunday each newspaper devotes a page to the unremunerated labors of the local bards. Guests at the hotels, seeing me scribbling in a note book, always inquired whether I were writing verses. Every one who can afford the luxury, prints privately his musings, which no one else ever seems to read. When it became known that Frijolita would dance, the editors themselves took a crack at versification, and published their outpourings neatly boxed on the first sheet.

I shared my hotel room with Bosco, the tenor, and Maestro, the orchestra conductor. Frijolita, stopping at the most expensive hotel, had dispatched them to the sort of hostelry where itinerant travel-writers were forced to stay, and they were much incensed. But to our room came the minor devotees of art from the Nicaraguan population to bask in their glory, and both Bosco and Maestro entertained them with stories of Frijolita's absurd tempera-

ment, and with sly comments upon her age, suggesting that she had not really danced before a crowned head since Napoleon Bonaparte went into exile.

Bosco was a cheerful person. He was small and rotund, but he sang divinely, and was not stingy with his accomplishment. In the early morning he poked a bleary countenance from his mosquito-net and greeted the Indian servantmaid with an aria. Then he would stroll out into the *patio* in his pajamas, carrying his guitar, to serenade the other ladies of the establishment.

Maestro was a withered, elderly person, once famous but fallen into obscurity. He was taciturn and unsociable. His one love was his fiddle. He would stroll away by himself to the back regions of the hotel, where he found inspiration in the banana trees and the rubbish heap, and there he would evoke weird squeals from his instrument in an effort to perfect what he described as a new technique.

Frijolita remained at the more expensive hotel, giving out daily interviews to the press about the many royal scions who had committed suicide because she could not respond to their love. Her husband sometimes came to call upon us. He was a dapper little fellow; his hair was very long; his face was always neatly powdered; his smile was endearing. He would greet us with a gentle wave of the hand or a gesture of his cane; ask after our health; and withdraw gracefully, a vision of dainty, silken-

clad ankles, leaving a trail of haunting perfume behind him.

A week elapsed. Maestro devoted it to informing his acquaintances that Frijolita was treating him like a dog. Then came the much-awaited *début*.

The theater was a shabby structure of European design, its two balconies consisting of boxes and loges, where sat the ladies of society. The unattached men filled the pit, many with their hats on, craning their necks to stare aloft. We waited an hour and a half for the President. He finally arrived. Every one rose. The orchestra played the national anthem. It was greeted with vast applause. Little withered Maestro turned and bowed. Then the orchestra played again—that piece about daybreak or springtime or something wherein the trapdrummer usually toots upon a bird-whistle. Here the trapdrummer had no bird-whistle. But the curtain went up just the same, revealing a conventional backdrop, and a huddled mass of plumes in the foreground which proved to be none other than Frijolita herself, apparently asleep.

More applause! Thunderous applause! It awakened Frijolita. Very slowly she arose from the floor and commenced to undulate. At some time in the distant past, one sensed that she had been a great dancer. Nowadays one felt that she had reached the stage where she ought to interpret only the classics. She was just a bit too heavy to do popular stuff.

But she was game. She undulated faster and faster. She flitted and romped and turned somersaults. Applause became a roar of approval. The music ceased. She bowed, leaped behind the curtain, emerged in a Spanish shawl, unwound it and threw it away, leaped back behind the curtain, emerged in another shawl—

There were fourteen shawls to be unwound, while the roar grew to a tumult. Then she was gone. Bosco, who was not singing to-night, came out of the wings, and hurried through the auditorium with a preoccupied air to let the public know he was connected in some way with the troupe, while Maestro acknowledged with grateful genuflections the approval of the spectators. It was an exhibition such as might be seen in any second-rate vaudeville house on Broadway as a curtain-raiser, but it was an event in Managua. Most of the Nicaraguans recognized it as an inferior performance, but outwardly they maintained an air of joyous appreciation largely patriotic.

Frijolita had no supporting troupe. There was a brief intermission; then she broke loose again. This time she displayed an elephantine pair of bare legs, and the roar of approval increased. Again and again she danced, interpreting thereby—according to the program—the latest wiggles of every land from Egypt to Japan. She came finally to her masterpiece, the genuine Hawaiian hula-hula. And then

occurred the unexpected climax. Maestro, either by accident or malicious design, stopped his music too soon, leaving her with one foot in the air.

Frijolita flew into a rage. Her far-famed temperament burst all bounds. Rushing to front-stage, she screamed revilement at the musician. All Managua cheered her. Rising in his wrath, Maestro screamed revilement at her. And all Managua cheered *him*. Frijolita was outraged. She seized such pieces of scenery as were not nailed down, and commenced to hurl them. The President, feeling that the whole affair was beneath his dignity, took his departure. Frijolita's husband came teetering forward to mediate.

“*Qué pasa?*” he inquired pleasantly. “What's the trouble?”

Frijolita glared at him.

“What sort of man are you? Why don't you defend me?”

He fled before another shower of scenery, and Frijolita fled after him. Managua carried the little Maestro out upon its shoulders, and treated him to champagne, delighted at the unanticipated entertainment he had offered.

But the next day the local papers did not mention the incident. Perhaps the editors felt that they must maintain appearances, and that Managua's semi-annual outburst of culture should pass off—in the press at least—with *éclat*. Or perhaps they had

already composed their poems, and could not deny themselves the satisfaction of publishing them. For the verses appeared, neatly boxed on the first page, eulogizing the performance of the incomparable *artiste*, Frijolita.

X

Managua, of late, has gone in for sports.

The marines have taught the natives to box and to play baseball. In the latter game, the Nicaraguan boys invariably defeat their mentors. In boxing, they still have much to learn, but they are promising.

The newspapers write up the events with a Latin-American flavor. In the advertisement of a baseball match, the public is advised not to miss:

“A wonderful sporting event! Colossal stealing of bases! Lightning-light flight of ball from pitcher to catcher! Formidable blows of the bat! Thrilling to the emotions! Do not miss it! Do not miss it! To the field on Sunday at the ten of the morning! To the field!”

Baseball is firmly established. Boxing has long been opposed in Latin America as a brutal amusement suitable only to *gringos*, but it has gained much popularity since the advent of Firpo.

One Sunday afternoon I drifted out to the field to see the local champions. There was a rickety

grand-stand, but the ring stood far away from it in the center of a bare pasture. If one wished a ring-side seat, one could take a camp-chair and move it wherever he pleased. Every one started back in the shade of the stand, and edged his seat forward as the shadows lengthened, finally reaching the ring in time for the final bout.

The promoter acted as introducer and referee. He was a prominent local politician—a large, stout gentleman in a big leather *sombrero*. He commenced with two diminutive urchins, who knew nothing of boxing; they fought so gamely that they were fagged before the end of the first round, but they struggled through three of them, obtaining additional rest while the promoter explained that they must not kick or bite, and then returning to the fray to put both hands together and shove them toward the adversary's face.

Next came two older boys. Then two full-grown men, one barefoot, one in shoes and silk shirt. The barefoot one, a wild-looking Indian with dark face and long hair, had evidently learned his strategy by watching game-cocks. He kept edging sidewise as though he did not see the other fellow. He would start his swing by winding up like a baseball pitcher. The other could always see it coming and leap aside, but it was an unwieldy swing, and the other invariably jumped into it, until his silk shirt was crimson. The spectators were delighted. They could not

appreciate science, but they recognized blood when they saw it, and screamed their approval. The Indian won.

Then came the semi-finals and the finals. Here the participants were trained to some extent, but they were handicapped by Latin vanity. They were constantly posing before the crowd. Between the rounds, instead of resting, they would turn to their admirers to make a speech. "He got me by accident last time, but I'll show you something when the bell rings." If one were knocked to the floor, instead of taking his count of nine even when he sadly needed it, he would leap immediately to his feet, determined to redeem himself in the eyes of his followers. Or one of them, having backed the other against the ropes and pummeled him to a pulp, would forgo his advantage to listen to the applause.

But these men were fighters. The old phrase, "the fistless Latin," is rapidly becoming obsolete. These scrappers never stalled or clinched to save themselves or to gain time. They fought harder than any American pugilist. And they had infinite courage. In the final bout one youth was greatly outweighed; his opponent cut his eye in the very first round so that he was almost blinded; even the Nicaraguan spectators, much as they loved gore, suggested that the battle should stop, but the little fellow insisted on continuing; he was beaten into a bloody mess, knocked down again and again,

pounded until it became a torture, but he never wavered; the moment he regained his feet he rushed forward courageously for additional punishment with a fortitude that no Anglo-Saxon could surpass.

In many phases of life these people acquit themselves as poor sportsmen, especially in their politics, but they are learning. Sportsmanship, after all, is not a hereditary virtue, but one acquired through experience. What American can not recall the many squabbles that marked his earliest boyhood ventures into athletics? It is only by training that one learns to abide by the decision of an umpire. I was rather amazed to notice that not one of the Nicaraguan boxers contested the decision of the referee.

XI

The one American resident that the Managua newspapers do not occasionally attack is the Marine.

Some years ago one periodical published an editorial accusing the Legation Guard of general misconduct, whereupon the soldiers promptly wrecked its plant. No such accusations have been repeated.

There are about a hundred and fifty marines in Managua. They were the cleanest-cut body of young men that I had ever seen anywhere. There was no drunkenness among them, no rough-house, no swaggering or bullying attitude toward the natives, no tendency to pick a fight with the local police.

“The only difficulty we ever have,” said the American minister, John E. Ramer, “is that now and then one of them falls in love with a Nicaraguan *señorita*. The lad might be able to support her in her accustomed luxury here, but he couldn’t do it at home. Consequently, for the best interests of both parties, the officers—if they see it coming—try to cheat Cupid by transferring the man to another post.”

The barracks are situated on the outskirts of town. The men are well quartered—with drill-grounds, club, baseball diamond, moving picture theater, and tennis courts—and so completely comfortable that a Nicaraguan president, paying a visit to the camp, once threw up his hands in astonishment with the exclamation:

“Your privates live like generals!”

Adjacent to their cantonment is that of the Nicaraguan soldiers. I strolled over to the native barracks one day with Corporal Landy, the Legation orderly.

“Hello, you bandits!” he greeted them, and all the Nicaraguans grinned. “These devils,” he explained to me in Spanish, that they might hear, “never have any drill or fatigue or anything else to do except to sit around and watch us sweat.” And they all chuckled good-humoredly, as though they liked it. Very casually he took the gun away from a native sentry to show me the rust upon it. “And

that cannon they have there, if you were to fire it, would turn a somersault and land on its back."

They talked together on friendly terms about the night last year when a revolution was expected. Each had the other covered with machine guns in case of an emergency. They laugh about it now, and each assures the other, "I was aiming straight at *you* that night."

I attended an inspection one Saturday morning. The *Rochester*, previously at Amapala, had reached Corinto, and Admiral Dayton came up to inspect the troops. There was a close-order drill, then extended order, then fire call, and finally the call to arms wherein every man took the post he would take in case of actual fighting in Managua. The bugle rang out. There was a scurrying of machine-gunners to the various emplacements about the barracks. Down by the front entrance the sallying party formed to charge with fixed bayonets through the streets of Managua.

Just across the line, the Nicaraguan troops sat cross-legged on the ground, and grinned appreciatively, as though they felt that this was an exhibition staged for their personal entertainment. They themselves were never called upon to practice for such emergencies. When the marines first did it, some years ago, the native soldiers had all scurried back into the barracks to get their own guns, while an anxious presidential voice came over the tele-

phone wire to the American Legation, demanding:

“What’s the matter in your camp? Your marines are running about like madmen! Are they declaring war upon us?”

They soon assembled again, and marched back to the barracks, while the band played “Dixie,” and the stars and stripes floated in the breeze. This whole occupation, because of its aspect in foreign eyes, was a thing that might be deplored, but what Yankee in a far-away land would not be thrilled at the sight?

XII

It is natural that the Nicaraguan resents American intervention.

There exists in the Latin-American’s character a combination of inefficiency and pride which induces the inferiority complex. His inefficiency sometimes leads him into a muddle from which he is unable to extricate himself. He invites the foreigner to help him out. Then his pride asserts itself. He resents the fact that he has been obliged to call upon the foreigner. He proceeds thereupon to damn him.

During my stay in Managua, the rumor circulated about—an ever recurrent rumor there—that the marines were to be withdrawn. Inside of an hour the American Legation was filled with diplomats from foreign countries, and merchants who owned

property in Nicaragua, all anxious to know if the rumor were true, all fearful of the destructive revolution that would follow overnight, all eager to protest against the withdrawal of the much-abused *gringos*.

In the crowd were many Nicaraguans who had been loudest in their condemnation of the United States.

XIII

Like most persons with the inferiority complex, the Latin-American is extremely sensitive. He resents, even more than the humiliation of *gringo* assistance, the assumption of loftier worth which usually characterizes the Anglo-Saxon.

This assumption, to us, is often quite unconscious. If we are aware of our national self-satisfaction, most of us try to hide it when traveling in the southern republics. Our diplomats and business men seek valiantly to proclaim our great admiration of our neighbors. It has become the fashion in our writing to promote an *entente cordiale* by flattering the people of these countries. The charming woman writer in particular—who makes a brief trip to the more modern cities of Chile and the Argentine, meets only the aristocracy, and completes her book as a bread-and-butter letter to the delightful people who fed her tea and cakes—is inclined nowadays, in

her impulse to jolt out of his complacency the reader at home, to picture all the Latin-Americans as infinitely superior to our own crude selves.

Yet all of us, even though we may have acquired a strong affection for our friends of the southland, still consider ourselves their peers. We know that every *gringo* is not to be ranked above every Latin-American. But we are confident that man for man—lawyer for lawyer, doctor for doctor, soldier for soldier, farmer for farmer—the Anglo-Saxon usually surpasses his counterpart in physique, intelligence, education, ability and character, if not in refinement. The Latin-American himself is aware of the contrast. He may, and sometimes does, voluntarily admit it. But he is naturally a trifle resentful when the *gringo*, by word or action, reminds him of it.

We remind him quite frequently. The most considerate traveler will lapse unintentionally at times into an attitude of condescension. Our kindly church-goers at home contribute their pennies to missionary enterprises in order that he may be educated and uplifted. And as though this were not the supreme height of international insult, however much he may actually need education and uplift, we appoint ourselves the policemen of the continent, take him under our paternal wing, and threaten to spank him if he misbehaves.

We assume that he should appreciate our kind-

liness and love us as the big brother we consider ourselves to be. On the contrary, he not only dislikes us as a nation, but distrusts our motives. He looks upon us—and frequently with good cause—as hypocrites who pat him upon the back as a prelude to selling him American products. In our missionary efforts he sees only a colossal national vanity. In the application of our Monroe Doctrine he scents an ambition for the conquest of his country.

To the average American this last statement may sound ridiculous. When we promulgated that doctrine, we thought only of Europe. It was later, when we realized that European nations might disregard it unless their citizens or property were protected in Latin America that we undertook to supervise the conduct of our neighbors' wars and revolutions. Our ambitions for conquest at present are purely commercial. But there are several incidents in our past history which these little republics remember with foreboding. They remember, for instance, that we fought with Mexico about Texas, and emerged victorious with Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California. They feel that there is something a little funny in the way Panama started its revolution against Colombia just about the time we wished to build the Panama Canal. They question our philanthropic motives in Nicaragua. They are always wondering where the lightning may strike next.

So firmly convinced are most of our neighbors that

we are what they always describe as "the grasping Colossus of the North," that when our government exercises forbearance, they merely suspect us of cowardice. When Woodrow Wilson for many years let Mexico literally get away with murder, his idealism was misunderstood. For a time Latin America looked upon the United States as a braggart that never executed its repeated diplomatic threats. Carranza, the special protégé of our State Department, posed before the neighboring presidents as a guardian of Latin-American rights, and had envoys touring the southern continent in an effort to align Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, and other countries, in a secret *entente* against the United States

Personally I dislike our meddling in Latin-American affairs. It seems to me that it should be any government's privilege to run a revolution in its own country if it so chooses. But there are many *gringos* in all these republics, who came there in accordance with local constitutional guarantees, and sometimes at the invitation of the government itself, who must be protected. If we do not occasionally step in, Europe will. Latin America—with the exception of the few nations which conduct their elections in peace—expects it. The Latin-American resents it, but he despises us when we abstain.

If we are to uphold our prestige, however, we

must apply our foreign policies—whatever they may be—to all republics consistently.

“We never know just what to expect from your government,” a Supreme Court justice said to me in Honduras. “You tell us again and again, for instance, that you will recognize only a constitutionally elected president, who gains office without force. Yet to-day you have recognized nine Latin-American presidents who did gain office by force.”

These were the presidents of Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Santo Domingo, and Mexico.

“And you tell us also,” continued the Justice, “that at all times, we must protect American property. If we of the little countries do not, you immediately send down your gunboats. In Nicaragua, two American filibusters, convicted of murder, are executed, and presently you take over the entire country. In Mexico, during many revolutions, countless Americans are slain, and much property damaged, and you content yourselves with writing notes. To us of the little countries, it all seems very unfair.”

As to the recognition of Latin-American presidents, Heaven help the State Department to apply a consistent rule, when so few are legitimately elected! But as to the protection of American property, there can be but one right course. Either it is not

worth protecting, or it is, whether it be in Nicaragua or Mexico. Practically all Central Americans to-day, although too polite to voice their opinion, look upon us as something of a bully who picks on the weaker republics.

XIV

That they are so friendly, despite their fancied grievances, is a tribute to the natural kindness of these people.

Even in Nicaragua, although the press may attack the *gringo*, the people as a whole are cordial to any individual American who will meet them half-way.

“I went home last year,” said one of the Old-Timers. “I’d been here for ten years, but no one in my own town seemed to make much of a fuss over me. They just shook hands and remarked, ‘Let’s see; you’ve been away, haven’t you?’ But when I came back and stepped off the train in Managua, every porter and coachman on the platform recognized me. The bootblacks grinned all over their dirty brown faces. And my neighbors all came hurrying to my house to hug me, and slap me on the back, and make those funny gurgling noises. That was my real homecoming.”

CHAPTER XVI

A LONG, LONG WAY TO COSTA RICA

I

I SET out overland—through the Nicaraguan Canal—for Costa Rica.

From Managua the railway carried me to Granada, on the shores of the largest lake between Michigan and Titicaca. At the end of a long wharf the weekly steamer was balancing itself upon its prow and waving its stern in the air, lashed by a gale that piled the combers one upon another until the pond resembled a young ocean.

It was a squatty vessel, condemned back in the days of Zelaya, but still running. It contained several bullet holes from the revolution that overthrew the dictator. When attacked, it had been so crowded with government troops that most of them could not fire upon the enemy, wherefore they had relieved their emotions by shooting upward through the decks.

Embarking passengers were looking forward to seasickness. The Latin-Americans always enjoy this malady, even when the sea is calm. Upon going aboard a ship, the womenfolk especially prepare for

it by hanging upon the cabin wall a picture of "Our Lady of Voyagings," reciting the rosary, sniffing the smelling salts, lying down upon the berth, turning green, and suffering miserably long before the ship leaves port. Such behavior seems to be regarded as essential to the gentle feminine character, and I sometimes suspect that any lady who failed to show the proper symptoms during a voyage would be regarded as just a trifle masculine.

On this trip they all had excellent excuse. The boat rocked and pitched frantically at its moorings. When we finally steamed off, our course lay broadside to the waves, and the vessel dipped one gunwale after the other, soaking the steerage passengers on the lower deck, and sprinkling those above. They huddled together in a dejected, uncomfortable mass of humanity, groaning "Ay! Ay! Ay!" and obtaining therefrom about as much relief as Anglo-Saxons find in "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Lake Nicaragua is a hundred miles long by forty wide. Since it was a twenty-four hour journey, much agony was enjoyed by all.

II

I landed the next morning at San Carlos, at the mouth of the San Juan River. There was nothing of interest here except an ancient Spanish fortress and J. C. Kennedy.

“They built the fortress back in 1600-and-something, or maybe it was 1700-and-something,” explained the latter. “I know it was just before I came here.”

Mr. Kennedy, a little white-haired Irish-American, who now owned a shoe-shop and pegged away himself for exercise, had twice been chased out of Nicaragua by the old tyrant, Zelaya.

“But I don’t know as I blame him so much,” he said. “I had a factory making ammunition for the revolutionists.”

III

From San Carlos the San Juan River led eastward toward the Caribbean. Once seriously considered by the American government as a possible site for the canal finally constructed at Panama, it was at present so shallow that only small launches could navigate it.

One was now waiting, with a scow lashed to its side.

I sailed with it at midnight, along with some forty other passengers, mostly women and children, all of us tightly packed into whatever spaces remained among the bags, boxes, and bales of a heavy cargo. There was neither comfort nor privacy. The Latin-Americans, with characteristic vanity, had all embarked in their very best clothes. Now that they had

parted from their friends, and wished to change into garments better suited to a long voyage, they faced a disconcerting problem.

The women cried out: "Gentlemen, please look the other way!"

A host of infants whined and fretted. Every one turned and twisted about in an effort to find a position conducive to sleep, until the launch suggested a cheese alive with squirming maggots.

I retired to the lighter, and discovering a sheltered nook among the sacks of beans, rolled up in my blanket. There was a splendid moon overhead. The black jungle, illumined now and then with patches of misty gray, slid past in mysterious procession. At times I would awaken as the motor stopped and the native boatmen climbed over me to guide us with long poles through rippling shallows. Sometimes the claw-like branches of a half-submerged tree came racing at us, as though shooting upstream to seize us; there would be much frantic shouting, and furious work with the guiding-poles as we dodged it; then I would settle back to another nap, lulled by the music of swift waters, and pitying the other passengers huddled in cramped discomfort aboard the launch.

But the pity was premature. Without warning the heavens opened up, and poured down a perfect deluge of chilling rain, and I found myself the only passenger not under a roof and with no space left



FOR THREE DAYS THE BOATMEN POLED THE LAUNCH THROUGH SHALLOWS FRAMED IN RANK GREEN JUNGLE



GREYTOWN WAS A TYPICAL EAST COAST PORT—LOW, SWAMPY AND UNATTRACTIVE—WITH BLACK COMPLEXIONS PREVAILING

under the awning. I had not known that every season was rainy season on the San Juan. And the deluge fell intermittently throughout the night. Drawing the blanket over my head, I burrowed down between two bean-sacks, where presently a boatman rushing across the scow with his pole gave a leap and planted both bare feet in my face.

“Pardon, *señor*, but you looked like part of the cargo!”

In the morning we docked at Puerto Castillo, a string of aged wooden shanties bordering the river, shrouded in an unceasing drizzle of mist. There were some especially dangerous rapids here, and the women were landed while the rest of us charged downstream through boiling foam. Our launch bumped and grated over the rocks as we plunged through the shallow falls, but the current swept us on, and we came finally into deeper pools below, where the women, straggling along the shore-trail, rejoined us, and crawled over one another as each sought to find her own baggage among the mixture of sacks, bundles, baskets and boxes, and to extract therefrom the ingredients for breakfast.

Each passenger foraged for himself. For three days we chugged downstream through rank green jungle with bits of fog clinging to its edges, through shallows and rapids, through drizzling showers. Every one had taken the precaution to bring food, which we ate without cooking. Now and then, if

we stopped at a thatched hut, a native woman could be persuaded to boil coffee, but it was seldom that we stopped long enough. With both sexes packed tightly into an open launch for many hours at a time, there was necessary a complete abandonment of the modesties which civilized society regards as imperative. When passengers complained, the captain agreed with them sympathetically, in the fatalistic fashion of these people, as though he felt that the discomfort were something to be deplored, but not to be remedied.

The captain was in reality a "Colonel" by title. Several of the men passengers were "Generals." Most Nicaraguans of any social standing have a military title of some sort, earned in a long-past revolution. Two or three of the women were the wives of government officials stationed in Bluefields or other isolated east-coast towns, and were ladies of refinement. But contiguity was productive of democracy, and both ladies and Generals joined the *peons* in lamentation of common misery.

The life of the party was a stout woman with a *machete* in the bosom of her voluminous soiled shirtwaist. Her seven children were constantly tumbling about over the other passengers to the annoyance of every one, and her admonitions that she would cut their throats if they did not sit still, illustrated by a waving of the *machete*, had little effect upon them. On the lake steamer, she had led

the mournful chorus of "Ay! Ay! Ay!" but she was now in good spirits and prepared at all times to conduct the conversation.

Her favorite theme was her romances.

"The oldest boy—he of the curly hair—was the son of Juanito, the blacksmith. And that one—the dark one—is the child of Pedro, the little Indian at San Carlos."

She had left the blacksmith, it seems, because he caught her at flirtation, and failed to chastize the other man. He had simply taken *her* home, and beaten *her*. She had not minded this, for it was justified. But he should have beaten the other man, too. Did we not think so? And who could love such a coward?

We stopped on our third night at a little thatched farmhouse. While the women remained aboard the launch, reciting their rosaries in unison, as was their nightly custom throughout the voyage, the men adjourned to a narrow sandspit, opened a jug of rum, and took turns riding a young bull, which, despite its youth, contrived to toss most of them into the river. Thereafter we gathered at the farmhouse, where some one produced guitar and mandolin, and we all danced with the farmer's three daughters. There was some question in my mind as to whether a gentleman about to dance with a barefoot partner should remove his own shoes. The book of etiquette, as I recalled it, had not covered this point. But,

considering that the boards were full of splinters which might have been painful to any but the caloused sole of a native, I decided to forgo the courtesy. When the boatmen and passengers discovered that I could play a few pieces of their own music on the mandolin, they hailed me as "Paisano"—"fellow-countryman"—and thereafter called me by that name. These Nicaraguans were prejudiced against *gringos*, but like all Latin-Americans, were eager to be friendly with any individual who showed an interest in themselves.

One of the Generals could speak English. His hobby was collecting the pictures of short-skirted movie-actresses that came with each package of the cigarettes I smoked.

"Those American girl are some nifty girl, eh? All the time I am in the Nueva York I go always to the dance hall to shake the—the what-do-you-call-it?—the wicked hip. And so mooch I like the scenic railway at the Coney Island—the one that go all the time through the dark tunnel! Some classy burg, that Nueva York!"

When the rain ceased momentarily, the men would ascend to the roof of the launch, among the crates of squawking chickens that formed the bulk of the cargo, and from that point of vantage would shoot at the alligators lying half-submerged along the mud-flats. The caymans were sluggish creatures. On the Amazon and other rivers, I have seen much

larger monsters disappear with the crack of a rifle. Here they merely lumbered with awkward dignity toward the water. The boatmen showed no fear of them. When we struck a sandbar, as we did at two-hour intervals, the crew would leap overboard to shove us loose, and sometimes would plod all over the river to find the deeper channels.

If this were ever to become an interoceanic canal, it would require infinite dredging. Yet, should traffic outgrow the Panama waterway, this will be the site of another road. The mountain chain which soars aloft throughout Central America subsides at this point. Lake Nicaragua is only a hundred and ten feet above sealevel, and from it another river empties into the Pacific just as the San Juan empties into the Caribbean. The principal disadvantage of a canal here would be its length. Any surveyor or engineer, making the journey as I made it, would swear that the San Juan was longer than the Mississippi.

IV

It was a relief when, after three days of it, we turned aside into a narrow channel, and pushed our way through lily-pads to the weather-stained city of San Juan del Norte, otherwise known as Greytown, our Caribbean terminus.

It was merely the typical East-coast town, how-

ever—low, swampy, stinking, and generally unattractive—with black complexions prevailing. The Nicaraguan *commandante* was Spanish. All other officials were negroes. A customs' inspector of West Indian descent, as immaculate in white linen uniform as only a colored official can be, directed me to a lodging house, and I set out to find it, hiking along a grass-grown embankment lined with rickety wooden shacks roofed with discolored tin, each house set upon piles above a pool of filth, and reached by a wobbly board-walk.

Once upon a time—when this whole shore from Costa Rica to Guatemala was a part of the British “Mosquito kingdom,” of which British Honduras is the only remnant—this was a thriving city. Walker, the Filibuster, made it his base of supplies. In the days of the gold rush to California, Nicaragua was one of the favorite cross-continental routes. In those times, as the residents of to-day expressed it, “Greytown was Greytown.” Now it was only Greytown. Prosperity had fled. The inhabitants lived, as tropical natives so frequently live, without visible occupation. A visitor, especially a *gringo*, was a curiosity. The entire population—descendants of Great Britain's former negro empire—rushed to the doorways to stare. Buxom wenches climbed upon their window-sills with a mountainous display of anatomy to ask one another in Jamaican English:

“Who the mon is? Who the mon is?”

I found the lodging house, but it was closed.

“Dey all go off for a lark,” advised a neighbor.

But eventually I found another hotel, kept by a Nicaraguan, who was quite amazed at the sight of a prospective guest. He had one large room, laden with canvas cots, and already occupied by a blind negro with the stupid countenance of a half-wit, who proved upon further acquaintance to be the town celebrity.

He was a musician. When some one led him downstairs and placed a mandolin in his hands, he played it as I had never dreamed the instrument could be played. He was a true genius. If his accompanist gave the wrong chord upon the guitar, he would fly into a rage. When, as a joke, some one told him that I played better than he, his indignation knew no limit. His eyelids snapped open and shut, exposing empty sockets, and he screamed like a maniac. He refused positively to play another piece so long as I was present. Thereafter he seemed to sense my return, even when I tiptoed into the room, and would cease abruptly to demand in Spanish:

“Has that *gringo* come back?”

But he warmed toward me when mediators informed him that I wished to take his picture. All Greytown was eager to be photographed. Seeing my camera, the blacks would call out, “Draw me

portrait, sah?" There were many old colored men here who could recall the days when Greytown flourished. They were very dignified and formal, as befits a patriarch, and with the peculiar vanity of the oldest living resident everywhere, each was extremely proud that he hadn't had sufficient ambition to move out of one place for sixty or seventy years. They now spent most of their time sitting about the rum shops, waiting for some one to buy them a drink.

As I passed one such shop—and it seemed to be about the one kind of shop in the city—a group of my former associates from the launch journey greeted me with an overjoyed, "*Paisano!*" and called me inside, assuring the colony of patriarchs, "This *gringo* is a good fellow! He's our *paisano!* He's one of us!" With that recommendation the darkies accepted me as an equal. Theirs was the elaborate phraseology of the Jamaican:

"When I first see he," they said, "I presumption that he be American." And to me, "Am I not conclusive, sah, that you be a traveler, and that you will embrace the primary opportunity to emigrate from this region?"

My former associates were rather tipsy with rum, and all were eager to show me the sights of the city. The only point of interest they could think of, however, was the chapel across the way. It had fallen greatly into disrepair, since the Church of England

is a more favored institution on the East Coast, but it contained a well-molded image of the Saviour. Some local artist evidently had done the work, for the complexion of the image was a rich chocolate brown. The natives looked upon Him with astonishment.

“*Carramba!*” exclaimed one. “He’s as dark as ourselves! He’s our *paisano!*”

v

A motor-schooner was about to leave for Costa Rica.

Its skipper was a Cayman Islander—a hard-faced ruffian with a whiskey-shaded mustache, who might have passed for a white man were it not for his Jamaican speech. Its crew was composed of semi-naked blacks. But all of them understood seamanship, which was fortunate, for the passing of the Red Bar, at the mouth of the San Juan, is fraught with danger.

We crept out through a winding channel. Giant combers, sweeping across the low sandspit, caught us broadside, and turned the little craft until the gunwale dipped water. Again and again they piled us against the opposite bank, while great sheets of spray broke over us and sizzled through the rigging.

The skipper, braced against the wheel, shouted orders that flew to leeward with the screaming wind.

The blacks, seemingly unmindful of their peril, leaned their weight upon their poles as they struggled to pry us loose, while a dozen sharks cruised hungrily below. Natives affirm that the sea-tigers gather about each passing ship, and are seldom disappointed. There were moments when it appeared that they might enjoy their accustomed banquet. But at last we were safe, and climbing up the mountainous waves toward the open sea, while the boatmen raised lusty voices in a chantey of the old-time pirates. And with a stiff breeze filling out sails, we scudded southward toward Costa Rica, the most charming land in the world.

VI

Five years earlier I had visited Costa Rica—after my flight from Mexico—and it was good to see it again.

We threaded our way among the reefs of Limón harbor, toward a sickle of white beach fringed with graceful coco palms. In the distance rose lofty mountains, verdant with forest and jungle, towering up and up toward the filmy white clouds. Over it all was the bluest of skies. This was the land which admiring Spaniards, years ago, christened “Rich Coast,” and no country has ever been more aptly named.

Limón itself was merely an average East-Coast

port—a city of rickety wooden houses behind a large banana wharf, with a population of Jamaican blacks imported by the Fruit Company, which owns this Caribbean shore. But the railway—incidentally a Fruit Company possession, and one of the three most famous scenic routes in Latin America—carried me inland through an ever-changing panorama of cane fields, banana plantation, thatched villages, and untrammelled jungle, through forests of magnificent big trees festooned with moss and vine, through rugged gulches beside a foaming river, up mountain sides where the stream dropped to a mere white ribbon far below, along winding cliffs that looked out upon endless vistas of waving palm tops, up into the exhilarating coolness of the altitudes, among rolling hills of luxuriant coffee plantation, past the red-tiled roofs of ancient Cartago, and down again into a fertile valley dotted with little farms, into San José, the most delightful capital in Central America—a city of quaint Spanish architecture, yet with every modern comfort—a quiet, peaceful city slumbering beneath a warm sun that never burns—a city with the loveliest climate, the most attractive *plazas*, and the most beautiful women in the world. Every town of any note in Latin America claims these superlatives as its own. Every traveler I have met joins me in awarding them to San José.

VII

Costa Rica is not only the most charming country in Central America, but usually the best-behaved.

So stable is its government that land upon the Costa Rican side of the San Juan River is far more valuable than the same sort of property on the Nicaraguan side.

It is one of the few countries south of the Rio Grande which can elect a new president without shooting the old one. Its leading families are so interrelated that the chief executiveship is largely a household affair. As a general rule, they take turns at it. Now and then, when they do quarrel about it, each family separates, half of it taking one side and half the other, so that everybody always wins. And whoever gains the office rules ordinarily with consideration for the rest of the populace.

In many recent years there has been but one period of rough-house in its ordinarily tranquil history. It was my fortune, on my first visit to the republic, to arrive just in time to witness its conclusion—the conclusion of such a series of events as might have sprung from the pages of a novel by Richard Harding Davis. I landed at Puerto Limón just in time to see Ex-President Federico Tinoco, the last of the Central-American tyrants, walk across the dock between two lines of fixed bayonets,

and embark for Europe, carrying with him the national treasury.

The story of Tinoco would be much more typical of Honduras than of Costa Rica.

As in Tegucigalpa there were three contestants for the presidency in the elections of 1919. No one of them gained an absolute majority. Congress, forced to decide, bickered as Congresses will. The president in office, scenting possible trouble, undertook to smooth the path of his own favorite by building up a stronger army. At the head of it was Federico Tinoco, a man of prominent family, himself little known in Costa Rica except as a devotee of pleasure who spent most of his time in Paris.

When the army was well organized, Tinoco cleared the whole situation by capturing the palace and declaring *himself* president. Thereupon he reorganized Congress with his own personal friends, and was constitutionally elected. There were rumors—as always in these countries—that an American concession hunter financed the whole *coup*. It is more probable that Tinoco's family influenced the move.

Federico, the Dictator, was himself a weak, timid, vacillating man. The real power behind the throne was a younger brother, Joaquín, who became the Secretary of War. Young, cultured, charming, the handsomest man in a nation of handsome men, Joa-

quín was a striking figure everywhere. Magnetic beyond description, he could, in a five-minute conversation, bring his worst enemy to his own point of view. He had traveled throughout the world, had been received in the most exclusive salons of many European capitals, and spoke fluently several languages. He could outride, outwrestle, outbox, outfence, and outswim any youth in the Republic. At philandering he was supreme. Now and then some outraged husband challenged him to a duel, but Joaquín could outshoot them all. When there were murmurs against the high-handed methods by which the Tinocos had attained office, he announced in Congress:

“If any citizen disapproves of it, he can meet me man to man with revolvers.”

Secure in his power, Joaquín led the life of a young prince. He designed strikingly beautiful uniforms for himself. He gave many gay parties. He himself never drank, but there was always plenty of champagne for his friends. He made costly presents to his women, and not content with the local beauties, he imported occasional high-class courtesans from overseas.

His extravagances proved a drain upon the national treasury. When President Federico protested, Joaquín quickly overruled him. And Federico, despite his desire to execute honestly the duties into which family ambition had forced him, proceeded to



A MACHINE-GUN TOWER BUILT BY THE TYRANT TINOCO

tax the country exorbitantly. When the *peons* had no money left, he took their oxen. He confiscated the beasts under pretense of using them for the army, but sold them to cattlemen in the West Indies. The reserves in the local banks he seized to pay the interest on the national debt. At length, he commenced to sell some of the art treasures in the national theater.

It was his one remaining hope to secure a foreign loan. Before capitalists would listen to his pleas, however, he must secure the recognition of the American government. In his efforts to win the favor of Washington, he used every possible device. He extended every courtesy to American citizens. He joined the United States in declaring war on Germany. He offered our War Department the use of Costa Rican territory in the fortification of the Canal Zone.

His stumbling block was Benjamin F. Chase, American Consul in San José. In the absence of a Minister, Mr. Chase was reporting to Washington the current political history of Costa Rica. Being a stubborn sort of Yankee, he was reporting the truth, even though the Tinocos tried to make a pet of him. Having failed to bribe the Consul, according to rumors afloat at the time, the Dictator is said to have hired another *gringo* to shoot him. Several of the more loyal Americans formed themselves into a guard at the Consulate, and the Consul continued

to send home unfavorable reports on the Tinoco régime.

All Costa Rica murmured its discontent at the increasing taxation. Revolutions commenced to brew. In the suppression of the uprisings, Joaquín introduced a reign of terror. His spies were everywhere. Political opponents were thrown into old-fashioned wooden stocks and exhibited in public. The prisons were filled. According to reports, prisoners were frequently beaten with iron rods, and sometimes hung up by the thumbs. Many of the stories have the exaggerated ring of the yarns told about Cabrera in Guatemala. They include those of a man burned in oil, of gold teeth being extracted and resold to dentists, and of a private swimming pool where Joaquín, after depriving his prisoners of water for forty-eight hours, would march them out to see him diving and swimming in gallons of it.

The leading revolutionist, Don Julio Acosta, had a force of two hundred men on the Nicaraguan border, but Joaquín's army numbered about ten thousand. The revolutionists had neither arms nor ammunition. Washington, following its traditional policy of selling weapons only to constitutionally elected presidents, whether they were crooks or not, refused to sell to Don Julio, insisting that he work out his own salvation.

Indirectly, it was Tinoco's large army that caused his own destruction. Knowing that all Costa Rica

hated him, he had strengthened it with soldiers of fortune from Nicaragua and Honduras, of the type who gravitate wherever there is trouble. They *must* be paid. All other government employees could wait. The school teachers, in protest, left their schools, and marched through the streets with their pupils. Emboldened by their example, the letter carriers and the street cleaners followed. When the police sought to disperse them, the women cried:

“We are your friends! We are protesting against the cutting of your salaries to pay foreign soldiers!”

And the police stood back, while all San José surged through the streets, shouting, “Down with the Tinocos!” Joaquín at the time was absent from the city. Hearing of the disturbance, he hastened back, and led his troops in person, riding fearlessly into the mob. Some of the women and children were forced into the American Consulate, and surged upstairs to the balcony. A young boy attempted a speech. Tinoco soldiers drew their rifles and fired. The crowd fled back inside the building, leaving Consul Chase alone on the balcony. Eleven bullet holes dented the stucco behind him, but he was not harmed.

This was the beginning of the end. Joaquín quickly pacified the city, for no one dared to face him. But—the Old-Timers suspect—a little note came down from Washington. Federico, the nominal Dictator, made plans for an exit. He handed

his resignation to the Vice-President, who appointed him "Ambassador-at-Large" to Europe, with a salary of \$100,000 a year, payable in advance. All of his cohorts received similar appointments—by a procedure which, if unethical, was quite proper according to international law—until their salaries exhausted what little cash remained in the country.

Joaquín, the real Dictator, had no intention of fleeing with them. Whatever might be said of him, he was no coward. He meant to fight to the end. But the end came unexpectedly. He was strolling nonchalantly down the street one evening when a man saluted him. Always military, Joaquín snapped his own hand to his hat-brim. He did not observe that the other man had saluted with the left hand, or that the right concealed a revolver. As Joaquín's fingers touched the hat-brim, the man shot him. Then he turned and ran up the street, blazing into the air, and shouting:

"Joaquín is dead! Costa Rica lives!"

The elder Tinoco was at home in the castle when the news reached him. Seizing the telephone, he called up the prison.

"Shoot every political prisoner!" he ordered.

But with the death of Joaquín a change had come over the Republic. It was Joaquín the people feared, and not Federico. The order was not obeyed. Surrounded by foreign soldiers of fortune, the ex-Dictator emerged from the castle only to at-

tend his brother's funeral. Then, in a heavily-guarded train, he fled to Puerto Limón, and sailed for Europe.

As was my usual fortune in Latin-American travel, I arrived just in time to hear the shouting. And all Costa Rica *was* shouting. When I drew any young man aside to ask who it was that shot Joaquín, he would glance hastily about to see that he was not overheard. Then he would whisper:

“Sh! Don't tell any one! I did it!”

But Joaquín had his mourners. Every day several young ladies would visit his grave to deck it with flowers, each glaring jealously at the others who loved his memory.

VIII

This story, it should be emphasized again, is not typical of Costa Rica. Although the second smallest of the Central American republics, it is the most progressive.

Fortune favored it in the beginning by giving it few gold mines to attract to its shores the swashbuckling adventurer whose blood to-day keeps so many of the neighboring countries in turmoil. It is essentially a country of coffee and bananas, and so fertile that wooden railway ties and telegraph poles are popularly reputed to take root and grow. It was settled not by *conquistadores* bent upon enslaving

the Indian, but by Gallegos, the hardest-working farmers of Spain, who, instead of mating with the aborigines, followed the example of our own Puritan forefathers by exterminating them. To-day, when one passes the black fringe of the Caribbean coast, one finds neither the Indian population of Guatemala nor the mixed-breed population of the other countries, but a race eighty per cent. Spanish, even among the lowly *peons*.

Not being troubled by recurrent civil war, Costa Rica has made progress. It is not an astounding country, for most of its 23,000 square miles of territory are still clad with jungle, and its population of 400,000 people live mostly in one mountain district, where the four principal cities are connected by a wagon road not more than thirty miles in length. But its people, for the most part, own their own farms, and are contented. Education is of a higher standard than in the other countries. There is railway connection with either coast. It is such a healthful land that Canal Zone doctors always recommend it to convalescents. It has a national theater which equals in its interior decoration any theater in the United States. Yet it remains quaint, and picturesque, and Spanish—charming and delightful—so thoroughly charming and delightful that the author, after living there for a month on two different visits, discovers no further observations in his notebook.

IX

To be fair to these countries, no story of revolution is altogether typical of any of them.

Life even in Mexico or Honduras is normally tranquil. Bloodshed and comic opera are not the rule, but the exception. If all of these republics have their turbulous moments, they quickly recover.

After the flight of Tinoco, Costa Rica settled quickly into its accustomed routine. Through the narrow Moorish streets the oxen plodded slowly behind the driver's goad-pole, their noses to the ground, their massive shoulders swaying from side to side. In the coffee fields outside the capital the *peons* laughed and chatted as they filled their baskets with red berries. In the *plaza* the military band played on Sunday evenings, while youths and maidens strolled beneath the palm trees. And the same moon that smiled upon Mexico peeped over the low flat roofs, while the plaintive notes of the *gendarme's* whistle echoed through the quiet city with its benediction of "All's well."

CHAPTER XVII

ADIOS!

I

A FRUIT steamer carried me back to New Orleans.

After several months of travel in Mexico and Central America—travel marked by many delays, by many postponements until *mañana*, by many controversies with petty officials, and by many struggles with the pompous formality of diminutive republics—one looked forward to landing again in an Anglo-Saxon country.

The steamer docked at eight in the evening. The immigration inspector had gone home. "How soon may we land?" the passengers inquired. "Tomorrow," was the answer. We spent the next several hours filling out an inventory of our personal baggage for the benefit of the customs' service. Foreigners answered a lengthy questionnaire containing such queries as, "Are you an anarchist?", "Are you a polygamist?", and "Do you believe in the overthrow of the United States' government by force?" The only officials that were on the job were the prohibition agents. They came aboard

in search of liquor. So the captain took them to his cabin, and opened a bottle of Scotch.

II

On the Pullman that carried me northward to New York, a traveling man engaged me in conversation.

“I see you’ve been to South America. I noticed the Nicaragua label on your suit case. How’s things down there? Pretty wild bunch, ain’t they?”

And he laid aside his newspaper, which contained accounts of one lynching, one fist fight on the floor of Congress, four fashionable divorce scandals, one Ku Klux Klan outrage, sixteen robberies, two incendiary fires, seven murders, and the innumerable charges and countercharges of bribery and corruption which distinguish a presidential campaign.

III

Perhaps, since in my first chapter my destination was Panama, I ought to mention it. I stopped there for several weeks after my first flight from Mexico.

The Canal Zone, regarded as an example of what Anglo-Saxon efficiency can do to the tropics, was quite astounding. The once fever-stricken swamp had become a well-ordered garden of palm-shaded walks lined with neat cottages. The screening which

inclosed each dwelling was no longer necessary. The malaria-bearing mosquito had departed. In the big ditch steamers were handled with the regularity of clockwork. They plowed into the huge locks; giant doors swung shut behind them; water poured as though by magic into the artificial pool, raising the vessels to the higher level of Gatun Lake; the doors opened; the ships steamed away toward the Pacific. Everything in the Zone ran smoothly, with the same mechanical precision that marked the operation of the Canal.

But nowhere in the Americanized territory did one find the quiet contentment of the Latin Countries. Whenever the American employees wished to enjoy life, they crossed the boundary into the Republic of Panama, to the land of music, and tinkling fountains, martini cocktails, and dark-eyed *señoritas*.

IV

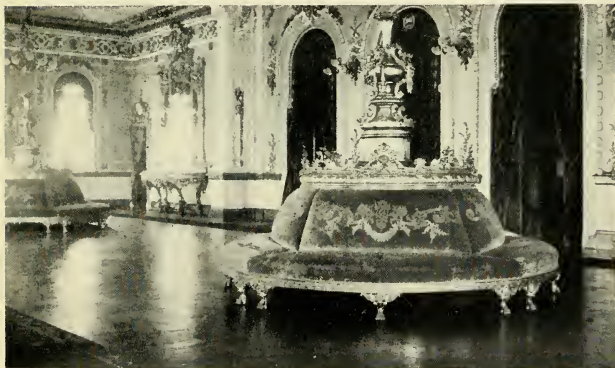
Among the many letters awaiting me at home, there was one with a Mexican postmark. It was from the long-lost Eustace. It said:

“I suppose you’ll wonder why I haven’t written you before. The fact is, I’ve fallen into the swing of things down here, and keep putting everything off until *mañana*.

“After I left you in Mexico City that day, ever



SAN JOSÉ CONTAINS THE MOST DELIGHTFUL PLAZAS, AND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD



IN ITS INTERIOR DECORATION THE COSTA RICAN NATIONAL THEATRE
EQUALS ANY THEATRE IN THE UNITED STATES

so long ago, I reached Manzanillo without difficulty. There was nothing thrilling about my escape. I simply boarded a steamer and sailed away.

“For a couple of years after that I damned Mexico, and made fun of it, and talked about its many faults. I told the story of our heroic flight from Zamorra, and later from Carranza, until I was bored with it myself. The funny thing is that I presently began to hanker to go back. There’s something about Mexico. You can’t explain it. And as soon as Carranza gave place to Obregon, I went back.

“I’m cashier now at a mine in Durango. It belongs to that chap Werner we met in Mazatlán. Once in a while the *peons* get drunk and shoot each other up, but as a rule everything’s quiet. There’s an air of peace and calm and ease and leisure that you don’t find at home. At first it gets a *gringo’s* goat. Then he accustoms himself to it, and likes it. He doesn’t have to answer an alarm clock, or rush for a subway train, or reach an office at a prescribed hour, or dash out for a hasty bite of lunch between business engagements, or punch a time clock, or take efficiency tests, or come home hanging to a trolley strap. He can settle any troublesome question in the native fashion by postponing it until *mañana*.

“I like these people, too. There’s nothing much that a *gringo* can say to their credit. But when you get into their ways, they’re mighty likeable. And

I've gotten completely into their ways. I'm married. No, it wasn't Lolita. When I reached Mazatlán I found that Werner had married her. When he went around to break the news of our fictitious death, he got acquainted, and stepped off with my old sweetheart. So I've married Herminia. I've told her that our cablegram was sheer bunk, and that you're still alive, but the news no longer seems to thrill her, although she would like to be remembered to you.

"It looks like I'm settled here for life. Whenever I suggest taking a trip back to California, Herminia is frightened stiff. Every one down here considers the old U. S. too dangerous a place to visit. Just as we get mostly the bandit stories from Mexico, so they get all the train robberies and lynching news from home. Just as our people regard all Mexicans as chronic revolutionists, so the Mexicans look upon us as a lot of bank-looters who, when not professionally occupied, take our diversion in chasing colored people and stringing them to lamp-posts.

"I've just received word that our old friend Barlow is dead. Do you remember how pessimistic he was about the dangers of Mexico? Always carrying a gun, and warning everybody to take no chances? He went home to the States last month, and died from drinking wood alcohol.

"Some time ago I met a former acquaintance of ours. It was that oily little fellow that came to

our room in Mexico City—Mario Sanchez, aide to His Excellency, Venustiano Carranza. I lent him the price of a square meal. He had lost his job when Carranza ducked out of the capital with Obregon after him. We got rather chummy, and I asked him whether he really had been planning to murder us. And what do you think? Carranza himself believed that yarn about our being captured by Zamorra. He merely wanted to give us each five hundred dollars to keep quiet about it! And to think we both went scampering out of Mexico! And wondered why no one stopped us!

“But I’m pretty well satisfied with the way things have turned out. And this brings me to the main reason for coming out of my lethargy to write a letter. I do so from sheer pride. I’ve become a parent. Very much so. It’s twins. All of which goes to prove your old contention that this is a country whose charm lies in its habit of providing the unexpected.

“So good luck, and *Adios!*”

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5

